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PRINCIPLES

OF

CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE

ILLUSTRATED.

Printed by John Moir,
Edinburgh, 1818.

PRINCIPLES
OF
CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE
ILLUSTRATED,

BY AN EXAMINATION OF ARGUMENTS
SUBVERSIVE OF NATURAL THEOLOGY AND THE
INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY,
ADVANCED BY DR T. CHALMERS, IN HIS
“ EVIDENCE AND AUTHORITY OF THE
“ CHRISTIAN REVELATION.”

BY DUNCAN MEARNS, D. D.

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UNIVERSITY, ABERDEEN.

πάντη δὲ Διὸς κεχρημέθα πάντις
Τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἴσμεν, ὃ δ' ἁπλοῖος ἀνθρώποισι
Δεξιὰ σημαίνει. *Aratus.*

Operibus præscripsit Deus antequam literis: viribus prædicavit antequam
vocibus. Præmisit tibi naturam magistram, submissurus et Prophetiam, que
facilius credas Prophetiæ, discipulus naturæ: quo statim admittas, quod ubique
non videris. *Tertullian.*

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1818.

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TO THE VERY REVEREND,

THE SYNOD OF ABERDEEN,

THE FOLLOWING TREATISE, WHICH IN ANOTHER
AND LESS EXTENDED FORM WAS PREACHED
BEFORE THEM, AND IS NOW PUBLISHED AT
THEIR DESIRE,—IS, WITH SINCERE RESPECT
AND ATTACHMENT, INSCRIBED BY

THEIR OBLIGED AND FAITHFUL

SERVANT AND BROTHER,

D. M.

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PREFACE.

IN the following Essay, it is not the author's object to exhibit in detail the Evidences on which the truth of Christianity rests ;—nor to review the whole of the Treatise on the ' Evidences and Authority of the Christian Revelation,' or even those parts of it which, to some readers, may appear the most striking and important.—The greater part of Dr Chalmers's work is devoted to the exhibition of the external evidence. But he has not merely displayed this branch of proof as the most important and convincing : he has asserted its ' *exclusive*' legitimacy ; and has represented as fallacious the principles on which the con-

clusions of natural theology, and the internal evidences of Christianity are founded. As all attempts to subvert those principles affect the external, no less essentially (though less directly) than the internal evidence, it seems an object of some consequence to expose the fallacy of Dr C.'s reasonings on this part of his subject; and to establish the philosophical, as well as scriptural character, of principles which form the ultimate foundation on which the whole of Christian evidence rests.—This, accordingly, is the aim of the following Treatise.

The ablest advocates of Christianity have been far from considering the different species of evidence, by which its claims to reception are supported, as traversing or obstructing one another: Nor, although they have estimated differently the importance of particular proofs, have any of them conceived it necessary or expedient to remove one great class, in order to give full effect to another. On the contrary, all the different sorts of Christian evidences have been consi-

dered as possessing peculiar value ; as acting in unison, and giving force to the general argument ; and great weight has always been laid on the combined effect of the whole. Those only, indeed, who take a full and comprehensive view of the different branches of evidence, and who perceive their connection, and the support they give to each other, can have any just idea of the strength of the whole proof. It is this connection between the different parts which forms the strength of every circumstantial proof, and which constitutes its great security against minor objections. Bacon has justly observed, that ‘ the harmony of a science supporting each part the other, is, and ought to be, the true and brief confutation and suppression of all the smaller sort of objections. But, on the other hand, if you take out every axiom, as the sticks of a faggot, one by one, you may quarrel with them, and bend them, and break them at your pleasure.’

But as full and comprehensive views of the general effect of Christian evidence, and of

the mutual bearings and dependencies of the several parts, can be considered as attainable by those only, who with more than ordinary powers of mind have devoted considerable time and attention to the subject;—it is not to be wondered at, that of those who stand forward in defence of Christianity, there should be some who give such views of its characters and its evidences, as tend rather to weaken than to strengthen its cause. Beset as sound religion always has been with enemies on all sides, it is difficult while the attention is engaged in defending one point, or engrossed by the assaults of one foe, to conduct the defence in so vigilant a manner, as to leave no pass open to the entrance of an enemy in some other quarter. Hence several modern advocates of Christianity, or of its peculiar doctrines, having obviously had their attention fixed upon the erroneous reasonings and insidious devices of those, who with singular absurdity appropriate to themselves the title of ‘rational Christians,’ have unwarily employed expressions and arguments which give coun-

tenance to errors of an opposite nature ;—and have thus laid religion open to the attacks of infidels, whose representations of Christianity, as having no foundation in reason, but in some inexplicable principle which *they* style faith, correspond very nearly with the sentiments held by religious enthusiasts in all ages. It is highly necessary to check the wild and extravagant excursions of reason into regions beyond its narrow sphere ; but the exercise of that faculty within its proper province, is indispensable to revelation. It cannot be necessary to vilify and prostrate reason, or deny the authority of any of those laws which regulate human belief ; in order to defend revelation against the attacks of those who either question its general credibility, or deny its higher truths. Any such mode of defence is indeed a virtual abandonment of all the evidences, by which a revelation can be proved to be divine. For unless the existence of those laws is acknowledged ; and the competency of reason, under their authority, to draw conclusions regarding the existence and cha-

racter of efficient causes, is recognised, it is impossible to shew that the truths of revelation possess any claim to belief; nay, it is impossible to account for their being intelligible to human beings. While it therefore seems highly necessary to employ all proper 'weapons' for 'casting down' those high 'reasonings which thus exalt themselves, and for bringing them into captivity to the 'obedience of Christ,' it by no means follows that there is either necessity or propriety in bringing forward to this warfare weapons which are unsound in themselves, and the employment of which throws open the fortress of Christianity to attacks from opposite quarters. Foes of the description alluded to, are not indeed likely to attain any degree of success, until the advocates of Christianity, by their ill judged expositions of its evidences and doctrines, shall have destroyed that character of 'a reasonable service,' which it was its glory at its first promulgation to bear; and by separating between faith and reason, and thus opening a way for the influx of fanati-

cism, shall have undermined the foundations on which true religion rests.

There appears at times, on the part of advocates of revelation, a jealousy of natural religion, for which it seems difficult to account. The primary truths of religion, which human reason proceeding upon the evidences which nature furnishes, is enabled to establish, are doubtless sublime and important. Yet how narrow is the sphere of religious science within which unaided reason may legitimately expatiate, compared with that wide field which revelation opens to human view; and how uncertain must for ever have been the condition of man, unsupported by those assurances which revelation affords. It seems impossible that any man who possesses sound and comprehensive views of the extent, the harmony, and excellence of the Christian system, should ever entertain a thought of degrading or depreciating natural religion, in order that the vast superiority of Christianity may be apparent. It is true, that systems not more dangerous in character than false in principle, have

at times been grafted upon those primary truths which reason establishes, and have usurped the name of natural religion. But reason, and the legitimate conclusions of a theological and moral nature which she establishes, cannot in justice be considered as responsible for the truth or tendency of systems, which are the creation of extravagant fancy, or philosophical subtlety. The reprehension fairly due to speculative systems of this nature, cannot justly be directed against reason or natural religion ; any more than the censure so well merited by those mystical systems which falsely claim the title of Christianity, can be justly levelled against Christianity itself.—Still less accountable, perhaps, is this anxiety to depreciate natural religion, when it is considered how intimately interwoven are the principles of evidence on which it rests, with those on which the credibility of revelation depends. Such anxiety is consistent enough with the opinion, that Christian truth is to be evidenced solely by mental feelings ; but it is irreconcilable with the sentiments of

any who attach importance to the evidences, external or internal, by which Christianity is recommended to the faith of rational beings.

Attempts have been sometimes made by writers on the Evidences of Christianity, to bring the question of its truth into narrow compass: and according as their peculiar views have led them to rest more or less weight on the different facts and arguments composing that evidence, they have turned their attention particularly to those proofs which seemed to their minds the clearest or most conclusive, and have left the question to be decided on these grounds. Arguments are not wanting in support of this method of simplifying and restricting the evidence of Christianity, but they are much more specious than solid. Simplicity is of the essence of a mathematical demonstration; and the more simple it can be rendered, the more appropriate and beautiful it becomes. But the proof on which the truth of Christianity rests is in its nature complex; and it cannot be simplified so as to give it any resemblance to mathematical evi-

dence, without breaking it in pieces. Still it may be maintained, that one piece may be advantageously selected from the others, and its strength and beauty displayed; leaving the spectator to examine the others at his leisure. And if the part thus selected be not represented as the whole;—if the operation of disjunction be carefully performed, so as that the other parts suffer no injury in consequence;—the process may perhaps be harmless, if not beneficial. But if the piece thus selected for producing effect, be represented as the only sound or useful part; if the others, on which perhaps the faith of many Christians may in some degree rest, are stigmatized as not merely unsound but injurious;—it seems impossible to contemplate without alarm the consequences which may ensue. Dr Chalmers well observes, that ‘ there is such a thing as the love of simplicity and system,—a prejudice of the understanding, which disposes it to include all the phenomena of nature under a few sweeping generalities,—an indolence which loves to repose on the beauties of a theory,

‘rather than encounter the fatiguing detail of
‘its evidence.’ These are weaknesses of
the mind, which every one who would judi-
ciously display, or fairly estimate the Eviden-
ces of Christianity, ought undoubtedly to
guard against.

As under each of the terms *External* and
Internal Evidence, various proofs dissimilar
in character have been sometimes included,
it seems necessary for avoiding confusion to
state, that the External Evidence is here un-
derstood as embracing the argument from
miracles, whether of knowledge or of power;—
the *testimony* of the first publishers of Chris-
tianity to the fact of their being commission-
ed of God;—with the *Historical Evidence*, or
written testimony, the effect of which, if com-
plete, is to place subsequent generations of
men nearly in the same situation with those
who witnessed the miracles, and heard the tes-
timony above mentioned: *—while the term

* The history of Christianity furnishes some proofs of its truth
which were not possessed by the first Christians; particularly in

Internal Evidence is restricted to those proofs, which are founded on the character of Christian doctrines and morals.

the department of prophecy. Such proofs, however, are the same in kind with those which formed the grounds of their belief; and the admissibility of those proofs depends on the legitimacy of that particular kind of evidence to which they belong. There are other evidences furnished by history, which have been styled *collateral*, and which may be considered as wholly distinct from those on which the belief of the early Christians was founded. Evidences of this description, have not, it is believed, been considered by any as competent to establish the truth of Christianity, supposing that those possessed by the early believers are in reality illegitimate or insufficient. Thus, upon the supposition that certain principles which we assume, render the argument from miracles inconclusive, we cannot contend that the conversion of any number of men, effected by means of miracles, furnishes any valid ground for our belief.—It may be proper, however, to state, that whatever proofs history may furnish, of a nature distinct from that of those evidences on which the faith of the early Christians was founded, are not affected by the reasonings which follow.

PRINCIPLES
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CHAP. I.

PRINCIPLES ASSUMED BY DR CHALMERS AS THE BASIS OF HIS SCHEME OF CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE—CONSEQUENCES WHICH FOLLOW FROM THE ADOPTION OF THESE PRINCIPLES.

SECT. I. *The Conclusions of Natural Theology, and the Internal Evidence of Christianity, avowedly subverted.*

THE leading principle which forms the foundation of the reasonings here subjected to examination is,—that *all conclusions of a theological nature which are drawn from other sources than divine revelation, are fallacious.* Hence it follows, that *from the known character, or tendency of a religious system, we are incapable of forming any judgment respecting the*

validity of its claims to divine authority.
 ‘ There is perhaps nothing,’ says Dr Chalmers,
 ‘ more thoroughly beyond the cognizance of
 ‘ the human faculties than the truths of reli-
 ‘ gion, and the ways of that mighty and invi-
 ‘ sible Being who is the object of it.’* ‘ We
 ‘ are not competent to judge of the conduct
 ‘ of the Almighty in given circumstances ;’
 such judgment ‘ is founded on assumption
 ‘ entirely.’† ‘ To assign the character of the
 ‘ divine administration from the little that of-
 ‘ fers itself to the notice of our own personal
 ‘ experience, would be far more absurd than
 ‘ to infer the history and character of the
 ‘ kingdom from the history and character of
 ‘ our own families.’‡ ‘ We hold, by the total
 ‘ insufficiency of natural religion, to pro-
 ‘ nounce upon the intrinsic merits of any re-
 ‘ velation.’ || ‘ It is the part of reason to form
 ‘ its conclusions when it has data and eviden-
 ‘ ces before it. But it is equally the part of
 ‘ reason to abstain from its conclusions when
 ‘ these evidences are wanting. Reason can
 ‘ judge of the external evidences, &c. But
 ‘ reason is not entitled to sit in judgment over
 ‘ these internal evidences,’ &c. ¶

* § 184. (The references are here made to the article
 “ Christianity,” EDIN. ENCYC.

† § 170. ‡ § 166. || § 177. ¶ § 192.

The unusual ground on which Dr. C. has here chosen to advocate the cause of Christianity, he conceives to be of a nature peculiarly favourable for displaying its evidences with effect. He considers those deistical objections, which are directed against the reasonableness or wisdom of Christian doctrines and morals, as annihilated by the principles which he assumes; and he represents the general argument for the truth of Christianity as rendered more powerful and impressive. The advantages which he imagines to be thus gained, more than compensate, in his opinion, for the absence of those proofs which are grounded on the excellence of Christianity; and he accordingly hesitates not to advance principles avowedly subversive of evidences, which have in every age been considered as composing one of the strongest bulwarks of Christian faith. ‘The writer feels that in
‘thus disclaiming all support from what is
‘commonly understood by the internal evi-
‘dence, he does not follow the general ex-
‘ample of those who have written on the
‘deistical controversy. Take up Leland’s
‘performance, and it will be found that one-
‘half of his discussion is expended upon the
‘reasonableness of the doctrines, and in as-

‘ setting the validity of the argument which
‘ is founded upon that reasonableness. It
‘ would save a vast deal of controversy, if it
‘ could be proved that all this is superfluous
‘ and uncalled for. It is conceived that, in
‘ this way, the general argument might be
‘ made to assume a more powerful and im-
‘ pressive aspect.’* ‘ An infidel objects against
‘ one of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity :
‘ to repel the objection, the Christian con-
‘ ceives it necessary to vindicate the reason-
‘ ableness of that doctrine, and to shew how
‘ consistent it is with all those antecedent
‘ conceptions which we derive from the light
‘ of natural religion : all this we count su-
‘ perflous ; it is imposing an unnecessary
‘ task upon ourselves. Enough for us to
‘ have established the authority of the Chris-
‘ tian revelation upon the ground of its
‘ historical evidence. All that remains is to
‘ submit our minds to the fair interpretation
‘ of Scripture. Yes, but how do you dispose
‘ of the objection drawn from the light of na-
‘ tural religion ? In precisely the same way
‘ that we would dispose of an objection drawn
‘ from some speculative system, against the
‘ truth of any physical fact that has been well

* § 150.

‘ established by observation or testimony. We
 ‘ would disown the system, and oppose the ob-
 ‘ stinacy of the fact to all the elegance and
 ‘ ingenuity of the speculation.’ *

According to these views of religious evidence, it might seem that all objections directed against the character or tendency of religious systems claiming divine authority, are, in whatever shape they may come, effectually precluded; and that the advocates of such systems, resting their cause exclusively on external evidence, are absolved from all obligation to discuss the reasonableness of objections of this nature. If the human mind possesses no means of attaining any true conception of the divine character and administration; if by the exercise of our intellectual, moral, and perceptive powers, we can reach no theological conclusions which are ‘ of
 ‘ more value than the fooleries of an infant,’ it might seem that even the theology of Hesiod is completely unassailable by objections of this sort.—Whether the principles assumed by Dr. C., under the modifications to which in the course of his work he thinks it proper to subject them, are in reality thus efficacious for repelling objections, will be afterwards

* § 174.

considered :—meantime let us trace their operation in a more important department.

THE FIRST and avowed effect of the principles under consideration, is the annihilation of natural religion, and by consequence the subversion of the internal evidence of Christianity. As the term *internal evidence*, has, however, been often vaguely applied, and as the operation of Dr. C.'s principles reaches much farther than might be readily understood from their being merely announced as destructive of this branch of proof,—it may be proper to trace their bearings on some arguments which properly belong to the class of internal evidences, and which are very commonly employed for evincing the truth of Christianity, and recommending it to the general reception and obedience of men.

‘The chief use,’ it has been said, ‘of natural religion, is to shew the high probability of that being true which revelation declares *.’ It has accordingly been common, even for those who place no high degree of confidence in the light of nature, to display the chief arguments which reason draws from observation of natural phenomena in favour of the existence, attributes, and moral govern-

* Sumner.

ment of God, as coinciding with and corroborating the declarations of revelation regarding these fundamental doctrines. It is obvious, however, that if the principles assumed by Dr. C. are admitted, these evidences are set aside:—all theological conclusions founded on observation of the common phenomena of nature being pronounced fallacious. In like manner, the rectitude of God's revealed commands can no longer be urged upon the infidel; nor the strict analogy which subsists between the course of nature and the dispensations of grace. Such points as these can only be ascertained by comparing the moral judgments of the human mind, and the results of human observation and experience, with the method of God's administration. In proof of that state of retributive existence hereafter, which is brought to light by the gospel, the particular inequalities incident to the present state of trial cannot be displayed;—nor the manifest favour shewn to virtue by the general laws which regulate the world;—nor the judgments of the mind regarding the nature and deserts of virtue and vice;—nor the sense of shame and self-condemnation accompanying guilt;—nor the present narrow sphere of improvement, compared with the indefinite advancement of which our intellectual and mo-

ral nature seems susceptible. In regard to the doctrine of atonement effected through the sufferings and death of the Mediator; we cannot, in consistency with this author's principles of evidence, attempt to produce conviction in the minds of gainsayers, or to remove their prejudices against it, by shewing how reasonable it is to believe that in the unhappy situation of sinful man, looking fearfully for judgment, a God of infinite justice, combined with infinite mercy, should adopt such a plan for man's salvation. The advocates of revelation must no more press upon their opponents, the perfect harmony which subsists among all the parts composing the gospel-scheme,—or the satisfactory manner in which the whole combined comes home to every reflecting mind, illuminating its darkness, relieving its anxieties, and invigorating its weakness. All this is leading a proof of the truth of religious conclusions, from principles and feelings of human nature: it is arguing upon the ground that a scheme so wisely and benignantly adapted to the nature and necessities of human beings, and so harmonious in itself, may reasonably be considered as proceeding from the fountain of order, wisdom, and benignity. And this is 'an inaccessible subject:' it is 'thoroughly beyond

‘the cognizance of the human faculties:’ it is ‘like the ether and whirlpools of Des Cartes.’* In short—the administration of infinite wisdom, as disclosed by revelation, cannot (in consistency with these principles) be recommended by any such means as shew that it is reasonable, to the regard of reasonable beings.

The evidence arising from the excellence of its moral system, has usually been considered as forming an important part of the general proof on which the truth of Christianity rests. The pure and fervent piety which is there displayed, equally devoid of enthusiasm and of superstition—the excellence of the rules given for the regulation of the conduct of men in their intercourse with one another,—the powerful checks placed on human passion the moment it oversteps the limits assigned it by reason,—the superiority given to solid over specious virtues,—the candid, liberal, and humane spirit which it every where breathes, not proceeding from laxity of principle, yet completely opposed to morose austerity,—the simple and useful character of its positive duties, duties strictly enjoined, yet occupying that inferior place which reason assigns them, when viewed in connection with those of a moral nature:—these, with a variety

* 5. 149.

of other circumstances characteristic of the excellence of Christian ethics, when viewed in connection with the education and opportunities of the persons by whom the gospel was published, furnish an argument of no mean weight in favour of the divinity of its origin. The character of Jesus also forms a part of Christian morals, and furnishes powerful evidence in favour of the truth of that religion which he taught. If the principles laid down by Dr. C. are recognised as valid, all these evidences, however solid and satisfactory in appearance,—become radically fallacious.

The amount of evidence, of which Christianity is thus wholly deprived, may be estimated from the following consideration. Supposing the character of that Revelation to have been in no degree excellent or important:—supposing its object to have been, merely to inform the inhabitants of this planet, that Saturn's ring is composed of such or such materials; or that in a distant corner of the Universe there are 'beings who have the power 'of spontaneous movements in free spaces;'—the legitimate evidence of the truth of Christianity would have been in no degree less than we actually find it;—we should have been in that case under an equal obligation

to examine and weigh the external evidences with the most scrupulous care ; and we might, for aught we could tell, have incurred equal forfeitures through unbelief.

SECT. II. *The Evidences of Miracles and Testimony, indirectly subverted.*

Every one who is in the least acquainted with the subjects of deistical controversy, which have of late years attracted the largest share of public attention, is aware that preliminary objections directed against the competency of the external evidence, have, from the imposing form which they have been made to assume, been productive of no less injury to the influence of Christianity, than attacks directed against the reasonableness or excellence of its doctrines and its precepts. Dr C. remarks, that ‘ infidels are seldom found ‘ on the ground of the historical evidence ;’ yet it is certain that the historical evidence (in the loose and general sense in which he uses that term) has been a common subject of attack from the days of Celsus,* to those

* Τίς τῶτο εἶδεν ἀξίωχρεως μάστιγος τὸ φάσμα; ἢ τίς ἤκεσεν ἐξ ἑρανῆ φωνῆς ἐπιείσεως σε υἱόν τῶ Θεῶ, πλὴν ὅτι σὺ φῆς καὶ τίνα ἐπάγη τῶν μετὰ σε πεπελασμένων.—Cels. apud Origen.

of Bolingbroke and Hume; and the most formidable assault which Christianity has of late encountered, was that made by the last mentioned of these writers on that department of evidence. Upon the strength of alleged presumptions * against the validity of the Christian testimony, Hume attempted to reduce the whole historical evidence in favour of the occurrence of supernatural phenomena, to the level of those tales of prodigies and portents of which ancient history is full. This attack was triumphantly repelled by the ablest of his antagonists, who shewed, that there is, on the contrary, ‘a peculiar presumption in favour of such miracles as are said to be wrought in support of religion.’ But the argument by which this conclusion is established, rests on ‘the dignity of the end;’ † it rests on the high

* ‘If the spirit of religion join itself to the spirit of wonder, there is an end of common sense; and human testimony in these circumstances, loses all pretensions to authority,’ &c.

HUME.

† ‘The boldest Infidel will not deny, that the immortality of the soul; a future and eternal state, with our present good or bad conduct, not to mention the doctrines concerning the divine unity and perfections, are tenets which carry no absurdity in them.’ ‘Now, as whatever is possible may be supposed, let us suppose that the dogmas above mentioned are infallible truths; and let the unbeliever say, whether he can conceive an object worthier of the divine interposal, than to re-

importance of the information conveyed to man by the Christian Revelation. It establishes an important distinction between the supernatural phenomena recorded in Scripture, and those which are related by Livy, Lucian, Tacitus, &c. ; but it presupposes a capacity on the part of man to ‘reason,’ with some degree of probability, ‘on the procedure of ‘the Almighty in given circumstances:’ It proceeds on the supposition, that antecedent knowledge of the character of the Deity entitles us to conclude, that it is more probable he may supernaturally interpose in the affairs of mankind, in order to effect an end of the greatest possible importance to them, than for a trivial end, or for no end at all that man can discover. If such a capacity on the part of man is disproved, this argument, with the

‘veal these truths to mankind; and to enforce them in such a manner as may give them a suitable influence on the heart and life.’ ‘This object is no other than the interest of man, a reasonable and moral agent, the only being in this world which bears the image of his Maker; not the interest of an individual, but of the kind; not for a limited duration, but for eternity; an object, at least in one respect, adequate to the majesty of God.’ ‘Thus, it appears that from the dignity of the end, there arises a peculiar presumption in favour of such miracles as are said to have been wrought in support of Religion.’

CAMPBELL'S *Essay on Miracles.*

distinction which it establishes, falls to the ground.

Other arguments, corroborative of the historical evidence, might be mentioned, which cannot, if they are admitted to be sound, be supposed altogether void of influence; particularly on the minds of those who, without investigating laboriously and fully the intrinsic strength of that evidence, have become acquainted with the objections which Hume and others have brought against its validity. And, although it is impossible to view, with any other sentiment than approbation, the candour which leads, and ought to lead the advocate of Christianity to disclaim and expose such arguments in its favour as are unsound, —it seems equally laudable to exercise great caution in pronouncing arguments fallacious, which appear capable, in no ordinary degree, of warding off prepossessions against the conclusiveness of its evidences.

Depriving Christianity, however, of all support derived from such sources, Dr C. rests its truth 'exclusively' on the purity of the historical record, the real occurrence of the miraculous phenomena, and the unimpeachable character of the witnesses. The proof of these points, he represents as every thing necessary to the conclusiveness of Christian evi-

dence. To complete the proof, it is neither necessary to possess any previous conceptions of Deity, nor to take into view the character of the information given by the ‘messengers.’ The necessity, indeed, of referring either to antecedent conclusions of a theological nature, or to the character of the revelation, in order to complete the proof, could not be admitted without subverting the principles on which his theory of evidence is built. Such admission, in either case, would throw open a door for the discussion of the reasonableness and excellence of Christian doctrine. The proof, therefore, of the truth and divine authority of Christianity, he represents, in many passages, as completed by the establishment of the points above mentioned. ‘Enough for us to have established the authority of the Christian revelation upon the ground of its historical evidence.’ ‘The question is made to rest exclusively on the character of the testimony, and the circumstances attending it, and no antecedent theology of their own is suffered to mingle with the investigation. If the historical evidence of Christianity is found to be conclusive, they conceive the investigation to be at an end.’* ‘Upon the

* § 176.

‘ authority of the proofs already insisted upon,
 ‘ (external,) the New Testament must be re-
 ‘ ceived,’ &c. ; ‘ and nothing remains on our
 ‘ part but an act of unreserved submission
 ‘ to all the doctrine and information,’ &c.
 ‘ After we have established Christianity to be
 ‘ an authentic message from God upon the
 ‘ the historical grounds, where the reason and
 ‘ experience of man entitle him to form his
 ‘ conclusions, nothing remains for us but an un-
 ‘ conditional surrender,’ † &c. The loose man-
 ner of expression to which Dr C. is accus-
 tomed, might lead his readers on many occasions
 to suppose, that the historical evidence, if com-
 plete, is in itself sufficient for establishing the
 truth of Christianity. * This, however, is far
 from being the case. The historical evidence,
 in its proper acceptation, reaches no farther
 than to the establishment of certain facts. Whe-
 ther these facts prove the truth of Christiani-
 ty, is a point which involves the discussion of
 other evidence than that furnished by history.

† § 192.

* ‘ Christianity is a Religion of facts.’ ‘ What was origin-
 ‘ ally the evidence of observation, is now transformed into the
 ‘ evidence of testimony.’ ‘ In laying before the reader, then,
 ‘ the evidence of the truth of Christianity, we do not call his
 ‘ mind to any singular or unprecedented exercise of its facul-
 ‘ ties. We call him to pronounce upon the credibility of writ-
 ‘ ten documents,’ &c.

The historical evidence being complete, its effect is to place the persons to whom it is addressed, nearly in the situation of those who were eye-witnesses of the miracles wrought in attestation of the truth of Christianity, and who heard its first publishers declare that it was communicated to them from heaven. Assuming then, that even on Dr C.'s principles, the historical evidence, in its proper acceptance, is conclusive,—let us examine by what further steps conviction of the truth of Christianity may on these principles be reached.

In this investigation we shall derive occasional aid from the use of the same fiction which our author has employed, for at once exhibiting the efficacy of the external evidence, and shewing its entire independence of the internal, and of all previous conclusions of a theological nature. For these purposes he has brought forward a personage, whose mind is devoid of all antecedent conceptions of Deity; and who, therefore, having remained impregnable to all those delusive evidences which natural religion furnishes, must be considered, according to Dr C.'s principles, as the proper representative of all the rational part of mankind. The mind of this

infidel personage is, in certain respects, of very peculiar construction. Dr C. remarks, that the evidences of Christianity are suited to every species of infidelity : the subject, however, which he has selected for the purpose of exhibiting the effect of his peculiar system of evidence, is not derived from any of the classes of unbelievers actually existing : he is an Atheist, but one whose existence is merely potential. In the production of atheism, a variety of causes may operate : it may proceed from depravity of heart, from an audacious determination to take all hazards for the sake of acquiring distinction, from false views of the effects of religion on society, &c. The power which causes of this sort possess, to steel the mind against the impression of evidence, is sufficiently known ; but it is questionable whether there ever was a man, wholly unbiassed by prepossessions of any kind, who, after duly weighing the evidence furnished by nature for the existence of an intelligent First Cause, honestly embraced atheism in consequence of the total inconclusiveness of that evidence. Here, however, the Atheist before us differs from all others. Dr C. does not bring his system of evidence into contact with 'the more unmanageable tendencies of the

‘heart and temper,’ with ‘the stubborn disposition of the heart to resist every religious conviction.’ His Atheist is so constituted, that to him the being of God is ‘a pure intellectual question:’ he has no prepossessions of any kind. He is in a ‘neutral,’ or ‘negative’ state; he does not find the slightest reason for supposing that a Deity exists, or that he does not exist; nothing possessing the character of evidence appears to his understanding to belong to the subject. The assertion, that the universe owes existence to a great First Cause, bears to his mind the precise character of an ‘assertion, that in some distant regions of the creation there are tracts of space which, instead of being occupied like the tracts around us with suns and planets, teem only with animated beings, who, without being supported like us on the firm surface of a world, have the power of spontaneous movements in free spaces.’ He ‘cannot say that the assertion is not true,’ ‘it carries in it no positive character of truth or falsehood.’ ‘He affirms that, while there is nothing before him but the consciousness of what passes within, and the observation of what passes without, it remains an assertion destitute of proof, and can have no more ef-

‘fect upon his conviction than any other non-
‘entity of the imagination.’*

Having thus moulded the mind of this ideal personage, into such a form as to allow full scope for the exercise of reason in judging of the evidence to be laid before him, Dr C. declares his Atheist to be ‘in the best possible condition for submitting his understanding to the entire impression of the historical evidence.’ † That understanding is equally purified from all preconceived opinions, whether derived from Natural Religion, or from Deism,—systems which Dr C. seems to hold equally unworthy of credit, and which he indiscriminately designates as founded on ‘assumption’ and mere ‘speculation.’ Such is ‘the understanding,’ therefore, which he considers as ‘in a high state of preparation for taking in Christianity in a far purer and more scriptural form, than can be expected from those whose minds are tainted and pre-occupied with their former speculations.’ ‡

Before this Atheist can, however, ‘take in Christianity,’ it must be shewn that the ex-

* § 179, 180, 181, 182.

† ‘To be a philosophical sceptic is in a man of letters, the first and most essential step towards being a sound believing Christian.’—HUME.

‡ § 182.

ternal evidences submitted to his examination, are sufficient to produce conviction in a mind constituted like his. Accordingly, Dr C. proceeds to 'lay before' his atheist 'the existence of God by an evidence altogether distinct from the natural argument of the schools.'* He presses upon him the evidence from miracles and testimony; and he considers the triumph of his argument as complete. Dr C. seems, however, to have overlooked some very material circumstances in the intellectual constitution and habits of this ideal personage, or in the nature of the evidence which he thus submits to him. For it will be found upon investigation, that without introducing other elements into the process than those which, upon Dr C's. principles, are admissible, the result brought out by him is unattainable.

The first step which our author takes, in proposing to the Atheist the evidences of Christianity, is to put the question, 'What then (we ask,) does the Athéist make of the miracles of the New Testament?'—Before proceeding to the answer, it may be proper to attend a little to the general nature of the ar-

* § 182.

gument from miracles, and the principles on which its conclusiveness depends.

The historical evidence being assumed as satisfactory, we may consider ourselves as the witnesses of a phenomenon, properly miraculous. How do we who witness this phenomenon attain the knowledge of its *miraculous nature*? This knowledge is not derived from the evidence of sense, for the testimony of the senses can in no case establish any thing beyond the occurrence of external phenomena. That the event in question is properly miraculous, *i. e.* that it implies the suspension of one or more laws by which the ordinary course of nature is regulated, is a deduction of reason. For how do we come to know that there is a *course* of nature; that there are established laws by which the operations of nature are ordinarily conducted? The senses form no general conclusion: they merely supply particular facts, and from these facts we *reason* that certain general laws exist. And when the senses supply us with facts which are of miraculous nature, we in like manner infer by the exercise of reason, that the general laws formerly discovered have in these particular cases ceased to operate,

having been by some supernatural power controuled or suspended.

From the occurrence of phenomena, ascertained in this manner to be properly miraculous, by what means do we become convinced of the interposition of the *Supreme Being*? By the exercise of reason, agreeably to that fundamental law of our rational nature, by which we are impelled to refer every effect to an adequate efficient cause; precisely in the same manner, and by the same steps, as from observation of the common phenomena of nature, we conduct the natural argument for the existence of God to the conclusion that there must be an eternal intelligent Cause. Proceeding under the sanction of this law of belief, reason reaches the conclusion, that a cause sufficient to the production of phenomena implying a suspension of the laws of nature, can be nothing *inferior to the power* of Him by whom these laws were established. By further investigation of principles, combined with observation of the order of nature, reason farther concludes, that the cause which operates the production of these supernatural phenomena, *is and must be the power*, either mediately or immediately exerted, of the one Supreme Lord of Nature. But without recog-

nizing the authority of this law of belief, and the competency of reason under its sanction, to draw from observation of what passes without, inferences which 'regard the proceedings of the Almighty in given circumstances,' it is obvious that the conclusive evidence furnished by supernatural phenomena in attestation of a commission derived from 'the invisible God,' is effectually precluded.*

Having in this manner established the interposition of Almighty power in the production of the phenomena in question, by what process do the witnesses reach the conclusion

* There are two passages in Dr C.'s work, in which he seems to perceive the necessity of calling in previous conceptions of the character of the Deity, in order to complete the argument from the external evidence. These passages are, of course, wholly irreconcilable with his general principles and train of reasoning. 'The messengers may agree in giving us 'a watch-word,' (alluding to miracles,) 'which we *previously* 'knew could be given by none but their master.' Again, 'Did 'they exhibit any special mark of their office as the messengers 'of God; such a mark as none but God could give, and none 'but his approved messengers could obtain the possession of?' This 'question' lies, he declares 'within the legitimate boundaries of human *observation*:' a position which it must require great ingenuity to support, and still more to reconcile with the repeated assertion, that man possesses no natural means of knowing any thing of the character of God, being 'removed 'from all personal *observation* of *Him* or his counsels.'—§ 4, 8.

that the information communicated to them by the immediate operator, *is true*? No *necessary* connection exists between miracles, and the truth of a religious system. In certain circumstances, supernatural phenomena may occur, without having any reference to the truth of doctrines. The witnesses, however, finding that the miracle is announced and appealed to by the operator, in proof of the truth of a doctrine declared to proceed from God, are entitled to reason in this manner: Almighty power cannot thus be exhibited in attestation of error or imposture, *because the Almighty is omniscient and true*. There does not seem to be any other process, by which, from these premises, the conclusion can be reached. And whence do the witnesses attain the knowledge of that principle upon which this conclusion is formed, that Almighty power exists in conjunction with omniscience and veracity? This principle is certainly not the immediate dictate of 'observation' or 'experience;' nor does Dr C. deem it necessary to contend that miracles furnish any direct evidence of the moral attributes of God. The witnesses cannot derive this knowledge from the revelation; for supposing its doctrines already promulgated, the

witnesses by supposition possess no knowledge that the revelation is authoritative, unless by the evidence of the miracle. That God is omniscient and true, is a proposition therefore which rests on antecedent knowledge acquired from some distinct source, *supposing the revelation to stand exclusively on the miracle.* Now, in regard to all conclusions respecting the character or administration of the Supreme Being, founded on previous experience, intellectual principles, or processes of reasoning, they are of no more value, we are informed, than the fooleries of an infant. Yet these are found to form the foundation on which the argument from miracles stands.*

‘ What then, we ask, does the Atheist make
 ‘ of the miracles of the New Testament ?’—We
 are now prepared for joining with Dr C. in
 putting this question, and for examining the
 answer which he makes to it. ‘ If he ques-
 ‘ tions their truth, he must do it upon grounds
 ‘ that are purely historical. He is precluded
 ‘ from every other ground, by the very prin-

* The reasoning here employed refers more directly to miracles of power than of knowledge. As the argument from prophecy, however, rests obviously on similar grounds, it seems unnecessary to consider particularly the manner in which it is affected by Dr C.’s principles.

‘ ciple upon which he has rested his atheism ;
 ‘ and we therefore, upon the strength of that
 ‘ testimony which has been exhibited, press the
 ‘ admission of these miracles as facts. If
 ‘ there be nothing, then, in the ordinary phe-
 ‘ nomena of nature, to infer a God, do these
 ‘ extraordinary phenomena supply him with
 ‘ no argument ?’ * We shall admit that the
 Atheist is bound to acquiesce in the conclu-
 siveness of the historical evidence ; that is, to
 acknowledge the occurrence of the superna-
 tural phenomena. But it seems by no means
 clear, that he is precluded from entertaining
 very serious doubts respecting the validity of
 that argument for the existence of God, which
 is founded on those phenomena. It is indeed
 difficult to determine what are the objections
 which he is precluded from offering, ‘ by the
 ‘ very principle on which he has rested his
 ‘ atheism ;’—for it is by no means clear what
 that principle is ; or rather, while atheism
 may be founded on one of two principles,
 each very inauspicious to the effect of the ar-
 gument from miracles, this ‘intellectual’ Athe-
 ist seems to have appropriated both.

The great natural argument for the exis-
 tence of God, derived from observation of his
 works, can only be resisted on one of two

* § 182.

grounds:—either by maintaining, *that appearances of design do not entitle us to infer an intelligent cause*; or, *that nature exhibits no appearances of design*. There is no other principle on which atheism can be rested. If it is acknowledged that marks of design are found in nature, and that where these are found, a designing cause must necessarily be inferred, the conclusion is irresistible, that there is a God. In the ‘whole range of principles of reasoning, the intellectual’ Atheist can find no refuge, unless in the denial of one or the other of these premises. To guard against any misconception, then, of the opinions of this peculiar personage, it will be proper to consider him as resting his atheism, first on the principle, that from marks of design it does not necessarily follow that an intelligent cause exists,—and, next, on the ground, that no marks of design are discernible in the works of nature.

1. That the first of these principles is held by the Atheist in question, seems probable from this circumstance, that it is the great principle which pervades the reasoning employed by Dr C. for setting aside the natural evidences for the existence of Deity. That God is by his nature ‘invisible,’ and ‘inac-

‘cessible,’—that he is not the object of ‘direct or personal observation,’—are assertions which can furnish no ground whatever for Dr C.’s conclusion, that all knowledge of his existence and character is unattainable,—unless upon the principle, that we are not entitled to reason from effects to their efficient causes. Either our author holds this principle, or numerous passages in his work, conveying sentiments which he seems to consider as of great importance, are absolutely void of meaning.—That we have *experience* of God, is an expression common enough in the works of the best theological writers ; * and it is used to indicate the intimacy of that acquaintance with the character and administration of the Supreme Being, which is acquired in consequence of our being daily conversant with

* Since writing the above, I have to add to the names of Butler, Campbell, &c that of a more modern theologian, who uses the term ‘experience’ in the same sense. ‘Now, what God is doing with me, he is doing with every distinct individual of this world’s population. The intimacy of his presence, and attention and care, reaches to one and all of these. With a mind unburdened by the vastness of its other concerns, he can prosecute, without distraction, the government and guardianship of every son and daughter of the species. And is it for us, in the face of all this *experience*, ungratefully to draw a limit around the perfections of God?—to aver,’ &c.

CHALMERS’ *Astronom. Sermons.*

effects attributable only to Him as the cause. That we have 'no experience of God,' is an expression repeated again and again in the course of Dr C.'s work;—and, like the other expressions above mentioned, it is used in the way of argument for oversetting the conclusions of natural theology. The phrase, 'experience of God,' as used by Dr C. must be intended then to convey a meaning widely different from that which common usage has assigned it; otherwise the assertion that 'we have no experience of God,' could form no foundation for such an argument. Our author's reasoning must consequently be this;—as in the strict sense of the term, we have no *experience* of God,—*i. e.* no direct and personal intercourse with him;—as he is not the object of our senses,—all our pretended knowledge of his existence, character, and administration, drawn from observation of the phenomena of nature, is mere assumption;—*for*, it is incompetent for human reason to infer, from observation of effects, the existence or character of a cause of which we have no direct and personal experience. We are obliged therefore to conclude, either that Dr C. rests conclusions upon premises with which they have no connection, or that he holds it

as a principle, that marks of design do not infer an intelligent cause.

We may presume therefore that the intellectual Atheist rests his infidelity upon the same principle, as that which, according to Dr C.'s reasoning, renders atheism, in the absence of revelation, the only rational creed. In the account given us of this Atheist's principles, there is one expression, indeed, which leads to the supposition, that his sentiments, in this particular, differ from those of our author; and that his only objection to the conclusiveness of the natural argument is, that there are not marks of 'design in nature' to support the conclusion. This objection will fall afterwards to be considered; we shall in the meantime proceed upon the supposition, that the atheism, whether of this personage or of any other, is grounded upon the principle which pervades Dr C.'s general reasonings.

It is obvious that, to one who holds this principle, 'these extraordinary phenomena supply' no 'argument to infer a God.' 'Does a voice from heaven,' says our author, 'make no impression on him? And we have the best evidence which history can furnish, that such a voice was uttered. We have the evidence of a fact, for the existence of that very Being from whom the voice proceed-

‘ed ; and the evidence of a thousand ‘facts, for a power superior to nature.’* Alas ! to evidence of this sort, such an Atheist is constitutionally impregnable. What are ‘facts’ such as these to him ?—They do not render the Deity the object of human ‘experience’ (in Dr C.’s sense of the term,) or of ‘direct and personal observation :’ they afford no manifestation of the Eternal *Mind*. Does Dr C. consider the ‘voice from heaven,’ on which he seems to lay peculiar weight, as a phenomenon affording evidence *different in kind* from that which is furnished by the other miraculous facts to which he alludes ? Even anthropomorphism could not supply argument to maintain such an opinion. The ‘voice from heaven,’ furnishes evidence precisely the same in kind, with that which the other miraculous appearances display ; and from none of them can the conclusion which our author considers as so obvious, be reached by any other process than that of reasoning *from the effect to the cause*. But this mode of reasoning, the Atheist rejects as illegitimate. This is ‘the very principle on which,’ by supposition, ‘he has rested his atheism.’ It is the ground on which he remained inaccessible to the argument from design ; and that argu-

ment is in principle precisely the same with the argument from miracles.

There are two conclusions, which our author, in his loose manner of reasoning, here presses upon his Atheist, as if they were strictly interchangeable: the existence of ‘a God,’ and of ‘a power superior to nature.’ To us whose preconceptions are so different from those of the negative Atheist, the distinction may not at first view be very apparent. We are accustomed to consider supernatural power as inseparably connected with intelligence and with moral character; but to the mind of such an Atheist, no such connection would appear to exist. Should it therefore be admitted that he finds reason to conclude from the phenomena in question, that there exists a ‘power superior to nature,’ he is still very far from finding evidence of the existence of a ‘God.’ But the truth is, that this Atheist is constitutionally incapable of being convinced by any such means, of the existence even of a ‘power superior to nature:’—nay, he is incapable of forming an idea of *power*. This idea is only to be acquired by inference from effects produced by that attribute, which certainly never has been the subject of ‘direct and personal observation.’ The Atheist ‘af-

‘ firms, that while there is nothing before him
‘ but the consciousness of what passes within,
‘ and the observation of what passes without,
‘ it, (‘ the existence of God,’) remains an as-
‘ ssertion destitute of proof, and can have no
‘ more effect upon his conviction, than any
‘ other non-entity of the imagination.’ If by
this affirmation is meant, that the existence of
God, founded on reasoning from the effect to
the cause, can only be established through the
medium of other ideas than those which con-
sciousness and external perception supply ;—
sources, from which alone all the ideas this
personage is possessed of are derived ;—then
it follows, even from his own account of his
intellectual capacities, that he is wholly inca-
pable of forming a conception of power ; for
it is universally acknowledged, that no such
conception is derived from either of these
sources. ‘ If we had no notions,’ says Dr
Reid, ‘ but such as are furnished by the ex-
‘ ternal senses, and by consciousness, it seems
‘ impossible that we should ever have any
‘ conception of power.’ And as the Atheist
agrees with Hume, that ‘ we can have no idea
‘ of any thing which never appeared to our
‘ outward sense or inward sentiment,’ Dr C.
does but beat the wind, when he attempts, by

urging *effects* produced by power, whether natural or supernatural, to bar Hume's 'necessary conclusion, that we have no idea of connection or *power* at all; and that these words are absolutely without any meaning when employed either in philosophical reasonings, or in common life.'

The argument from miraculous phenomena being thus entirely inefficacious, let us attend to the effect which the testimony of the Christian witnesses is calculated to produce on the mind of this Atheist. Dr C. urges this evidence in the following manner: 'The ostensible agent in all these wonderful transactions, gave not only credentials of his power, but he gave such credentials of his honesty, as dispose our understanding to receive his explanation of them. *We do not avail ourselves of any other principle than what an atheist will acknowledge.* He understands, as well as we do, the natural signs of veracity, which lie in the tone, the manner, the countenance, the high moral expression of worth and benevolence, and, above all, in that firm and undaunted constancy, which neither contempt, nor poverty, nor death, could shift from any of its positions. All these claims upon our belief were accumulated to an un-

‘exemplified degree in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.’*

That these claims must be found irresistible by every mind, the moral or intellectual obliquities of which do not destroy the fair impression of legitimate evidence, we gladly acknowledge: but such is the perverse force of that principle on which the atheism now under consideration is rested, that it rejects, as ‘a nonentity of the imagination,’ every such ground of belief. So wide is the range of that law of belief by which we are impelled, from the character of effects, to infer the existence and nature of efficient causes; and so intimately connected is the natural argument from design, with every department of Christian evidence,—that the principles which may be assumed to justify resistance to that law, and rejection of the conclusions of natural theology, are found everywhere to oppose the Christian argument. Thus, how vain is it to urge upon a mind which disclaims the authority of this law of belief, the credibility of testimony, and the high moral character of those by whom it is emitted? If power be a word absolutely without meaning,—how can ‘velocity,’ ‘worth,’ ‘benevolence,’ ‘constancy,’

* § 182.

be any thing else than mere ‘nonentities of the imagination? ‘We do not avail ourselves,’ says Dr C. ‘of any other principle than what an atheist will acknowledge!’ And he instantly proceeds to avail himself of principles which the Atheist does not acknowledge; nay, principles which Dr C. himself cannot acknowledge, if his own reasonings against the conclusions of natural theology are good for any thing. To advance a principle, when it serves to overthrow an obnoxious train of reasoning, and to retract it as soon as it is found to encumber a favourite argument, is a mode of proceeding which is no doubt indispensably necessary to the support of certain hypotheses; but it is one which rarely escapes detection, even when conducted in the most artful and imposing manner. It is vain to press the admission of conclusions upon grounds which have been previously affirmed to be fallacious; and the existence of those qualities which give credibility to the testimony of the witnesses, can be proved upon no other principle than that which has been rejected. ‘The actions and discourses of men are *effects*, of which the actors and speakers are the causes. The *effects* are perceived by our senses,—but the *causes* are *behind* the scene.

‘ We only conclude their existence and their
 ‘ degrees from our observation of the effects.
 ‘ From wise conduct we infer wisdom in the
 ‘ cause, from brave actions we infer courage,
 ‘ and so of the rest.’* Disowning that pri-
 mary element of reason, by which the cha-
 racter of the cause is inferred from that of
 the effect, no means remain by which this
 Atheist can reach the conclusion. He is
 constitutionally incapable of ‘ understand-
 ‘ ing, as we do, the natural signs of vera-
 ‘ city,’ &c. ‘ In the conclusions we form,
 ‘ (says Mr Stewart) concerning the minds and
 ‘ characters of our fellow creatures, as well as
 ‘ in the inferences drawn concerning “ the
 ‘ invisible things of God from the things that
 ‘ are made,” there is a perception of the un-
 derstanding implied, for which neither *rea-*
 ‘ *soning* nor *experience* is sufficient to account.’
 He who denies the existence of that power
 of the human intellect, by the exercise of
 which we perceive the nature and qualities of
 the great Efficient Cause in the nature and
 qualities of his works, cannot, without gross
 inconsistency, pretend that he is capable of
 perceiving the moral qualities of his fellow-
 men by any means whatever. Consciousness,

* Dr Reid.

observation, experience, reasoning, will serve him in no stead here. The 'negative' attainments of this Atheist, which served to render him impregnable to the argument from design, place him also beyond the reach of the evidence which Dr C. here lays before him. That species of evidence, so far from being 'altogether distinct,' as Dr C. affirms, 'from the natural argument of the schools,' is in truth precisely the same; and as this Atheist asserts, that the existence, character, and administration of God remain a nonentity of the imagination, 'while there is nothing before him but the consciousness of what passes within, and the observation of what passes without,'—so the 'worth,' 'benevolence,' and 'constancy' of the Christian witnesses, *resting on evidence of the same kind*,—evidence furnished neither by 'consciousness,' nor 'observation,' must remain also 'a nonentity of the imagination.'*

* It might be added, that even the *existence* of the witnesses, as intelligent and moral beings, as well as their peculiar moral and intellectual character, must be considered by this Atheist as a 'nonentity.' 'It is evident,' (says Dr Reid, alluding to Mr Hume's reasoning, which proceeds upon the same principle as that advanced by Dr C.)—'it is evident, that according to this reasoning, we can have *no evidence of mind or design in any of our fellow-men*. How do I know that any man of my ac-

2. The evidences of miracles and testimony being incapable then of making any impres-

‘quaintance has understanding? I never saw his understanding. I see only certain effects which my judgment leads me to conclude to be marks and tokens of it. But, says the sceptical philosopher, you can conclude nothing from these tokens, unless past *experience* has informed you that such tokens are always joined with understanding. Alas! Sir, it is impossible I can ever have this experience. The understanding of another man is no immediate object of sight, or of any other faculty which God hath given me; and unless I can conclude its existence from tokens that are visible, I have no evidence that there is understanding in any man. It seems then, that the man who maintains that there is no force in the argument from final causes, must, if he will be consistent, see no evidence of the existence of any intelligent being but himself.’—*Int. Powers*,
 ‘Our conviction that other men are like ourselves, possessed of thought and reason, together with all the judgments we pronounce on their intellectual and moral characters, cannot, as is evident, be resolved into an experimental perception of the conjunction of different objects or events. They are inferences of design from its sensible effects.’—*STEWART’S Elements*.

Mr Hume’s general speculation concerning causation, with the imposing manner in which he urged the objection under consideration, gave it in his hands a character of novelty which by no means really belongs to it. In truth, the universal maxim of Solomon, ‘that there is no new thing under the sun,’ might be very successfully illustrated by the permanent character of those sceptical objections which are brought forward from time to time against the theistical argument from final causes. Mr Hume’s objection, reiterated by Dr C., is precisely that which is put by Theophilus of Antioch into the mouth of Autolycus;—and the

sion on the mind of the Atheist, who denies that from marks of design we are entitled to conclude the existence of a designing or intelligent Cause;—it becomes our business next to inquire, whether by the exhibition of those evidences, conviction may be produced in the mind of one who rests his atheism on a different principle; and who recognizing the legitimacy of the *inference*, denies the *fact* that there are marks of design displayed by nature. It has already been remarked, that

answer which Theophilus gives, is the same with that which is returned by Reid and Stewart to the objection of Hume. ‘For as the human soul is not the object of sight, but becomes known by means of corporeal motions,—so neither can the Deity be rendered visible to human eyes, but is seen and known by his providence and his works.’—AD. AIT. Lib. I. The same objection, as has been remarked by Mr Stewart, was urged by a more ancient sceptic than any of those abovementioned. ‘This celebrated argument appears to me to be little more than an amplification of that which Xenophon puts into the mouth of Aristodemus, in his conversation with Socrates concerning the existence of the Deity. “I behold,” says he, “none of those governors of the world whom you speak of; whereas here I see artists actually employed in the execution of their respective works.” The reply of Socrates, too, is in substance the same with what has been since retorted on Philo by some of Mr Hume’s opponents. “Neither yet, Aristodemus, seest thou thy soul, although it may well seem by thy manner of speaking that it is *chance* not *reason* which governs thee.’—*Elem. Phil. Hum. Mind.*

in the account Dr. C. gives of the intellectual constitution of his Atheist, there is one passage which seems to imply that this principle rather than the other, is that on which the rejection of the theistical argument from design is grounded. The passage is as follows:—‘ He sees *nothing* in the *phenomena* ‘ around him, that can warrant him to believe ‘ in the existence of a living and intelligent ‘ principle, which gave birth and movement to ‘ all things. He does not say that he would ‘ refuse credit to the existence of God *upon* ‘ *sufficient evidence*, but he says, that *there are* ‘ *not such appearances of design* in nature, as ‘ to supply him with that evidence.’ * Are we bound from this passage to infer, that the intellectual Atheist recognises the legitimacy of reasoning from observation of effects to the existence and character of an ‘ invisible’ efficient Cause, and that he thus brings to the investigation of Christian evidence, a principle, the unphilosophical and fallacious nature of which, Dr. C. has laboured to demonstrate? If so, we shall have the less cause to wonder, that the Christian evidence should be represented as productive of conviction in his mind. Shall we suppose that this Atheist denies

at once the existence of marks of design in nature, and the legitimacy of the inference founded on them? Or shall we rather conclude, that Dr. C. was himself but imperfectly acquainted with the intellectual constitution of the atheistical personage, whose existence he has feigned, and whose character he has attempted to describe?

One thing is certain;—with the argument from design before him, the Atheist finds *not a vestige of evidence* for the existence of Deity. His ‘mind is in a state *entirely* neutral,’ it is ‘unfurnished with *any* previous conception.’ It is not that he demands demonstrative proof or moral certainty, and is dissatisfied because he finds only *probability* in the conclusion, that a Deity exists;—there is no proof, no probability, ‘no *presumptions* upon the subject.’* The proposition bears no other character, than ‘the assertion that in a distant region of creation, there are beings who have the power of ‘spontaneous movements in free spaces.’ †

We shall suppose then, that this total absence of evidence proceeds from his having found no marks of design discernible in nature, and that we were formerly mistaken in resting his atheism upon the principle held by

* § 181.

† § 180.

Dr. C. We shall suppose that the Atheist puts entire confidence in that perception of the understanding, by which, from the occurrence and character of phenomena, we attain knowledge of the existence and character of efficient causes;—and that the strict neutrality of his mind regarding the question of God's existence, proceeds from his having found no appearances of design in nature. On one or the other of these principles, his atheism, as has already been observed, *must* be rested.

Although in ancient times, a very large proportion of the whole atheistical body was composed of those, who denied that appearances of design are found in nature,—it is believed that their numbers are now reduced within very narrow compass. Indeed, so numerous and striking are the connections, which modern science has shewn to exist between all the parts of the universe which are subjected to human observation,—so manifest is the wisdom displayed in the various arrangements and combinations of parts,—and so excellent the adaptation of means to ends*,—

* The sceptical reasonings of Philo, therefore, do not, like those of the ancient Epicureans, hinge in the least on alleged disorders and imperfections in the universe, but entirely on the

that those who still deny that decisive appearances of design exist in nature, may perhaps, without injustice, be ranked in the class of disingenuous disputants, with whom it is in vain to reason, and who must be left to the enjoyment of their own speculations. It is probably, therefore, a peculiar characteristic of our author's Atheist, that he has not the slightest prejudice of any sort against theism, but is perfectly ready to embrace it, should

' impossibility, in a case to which experience furnishes nothing
' parallel or analogous, of rendering intelligence and design ma-
' nifest to our faculties by their sensible effects. In thus shifting
' his ground from that occupied by his predecessors, Philo seems
' to me to have abandoned the only post from which it was of
' much importance for his adversaries to dislodge him. The
' logical subtilities formerly quoted about experience and be-
' lief, (even supposing them to remain unanswered,) are but
' little calculated to shake the authority of principles, on which
' we are every moment forced to judge and to act by the ex-
' gencies of life. For this change in the tactics of modern scep-
' ties, we are evidently, in great measure, if not wholly in-
' debted to the lustre thrown on the order of nature, by the
' physical researches of the two last centuries.'

STEWART'S *Elem.*

According to the view *now* taken of our Atheist's principles, this change which has been effected by the progress of science, must to Dr. C. appear extremely inauspicious to Christianity: since that 'understanding is in a state of high preparation' for its reception, which holds principles deserted as untenable by atheists themselves.

he find 'satisfying and appropriate evidence.' It will be found, however, that Christian evidence, circumscribed as it is by Dr. C. cannot be deemed by this Atheist, divested as he is of all prejudice, either appropriate or satisfactory.

On this Atheist, constituted as we now find him, our author presses the argument from miracles. 'There is nothing in the ordinary phenomena of nature to infer a God.' 'Do these extraordinary phenomena supply him with no argument?' The *nature* of the evidence, let it be observed, is in both cases the same. Phenomena are submitted to his observation, and he is desired to infer the existence of a cause, in which intelligence and power are combined. That the phenomena of the first class display numerous and striking appearances of intelligence and power, has almost ceased to be a subject of dispute; yet the Atheist perceives no such appearances; his understanding, nevertheless, is in a high state of preparation, it seems, for perceiving such appearances in the other class of phenomena. His negative mind can discover in the processes of nature, no appearances which give even *probability* to the conclusion, that

they were instituted by any thing different from the inert instruments employed in conducting them; nor from investigation of nature's laws, can *his* understanding perceive any traces of a power higher than that of the subjects of these laws; yet from the counteraction of these laws and processes, he is expected immediately to perceive the existence of God. On the 'blank surface' of his mind, observation of the celestial mechanism has inscribed no trace of a powerful and skilful Architect;—he has viewed the admirable construction of the planetary system, has investigated the composition of the forces employed, and the mode of dispensing light and heat; and he can find no more reason for concluding that a Cause in which power and skill are combined exists, than for the random 'assertion, that in some distant region, there are 'tracts of space, which teem only with animated beings, who without being supported 'on a firm surface, have the power of spontaneous movement in free spaces.' Yet this is the person, whose intellect is in the best possible condition for being convinced of the existence of such a cause, by a 'voice from 'heaven!' He has contemplated the skilful

mechanism of the human body,—the various combinations of parts united for the production of one common end, and that end the welfare of the whole. He has sought a solution of the great question of a First Cause; he has applied to the solution of that question, the declination of atoms, the appetencies of molecules, the energies of nervous fibrillæ, with all the other famous hypotheses of a similar nature, on the one hand; and on the other, the almighty power of an All-wise and Benignant Cause; and has maintained unmoved his strict neutrality of mind. And yet, with all this unnatural dulness of perception, he no sooner observes ‘health’ given to ‘to the diseased’ ‘on the impulse of a volition,’* than he immediately perceives ‘the existence of a God!’ That mind which judges it neither probable nor improbable that *life* is originally given by a *living* Being, is in the best condition for admitting the existence of that Being, from having witnessed restoration of life! And the understanding of that person, who having examined the admirable construction of the eye, finds no probability in the conclusion that *it was made to see with*, is in a high state of preparation for

being convinced of the truth of theistical conclusions, by the miraculous gift of 'sight to the blind!'

It thus appears, that supposing the principle under consideration to be that upon which this sceptical personage rests his atheism, the fiction introduced by our author for exhibiting the excellence of his scheme of evidence, is altogether incongruous. If it was his object merely to exhibit the external evidence as *superior in degree* to the natural argument and internal evidences, nothing worse imagined can easily be conceived.—But let us admit, that the Atheist, without divesting himself of his 'negative' attainments, may find positive evidence, in the miraculous phenomena submitted to him, of the existence of an invisible efficient Cause:—the question next occurs, what are the qualities which he finds reason to ascribe to that cause?—We shall for the sake of argument admit, that he finds ground to conclude that the cause which operates these extraordinary effects is possessed of intelligence, and of a high degree of power. The power possessed by this cause, is sufficient to suspend certain laws of nature,—but it is not clear that there is evidence before the Atheist sufficient to lead *him* to the conclu-

sion that these phenomena are the work of an *Almighty* Being, or even of a 'power' *in all respects* 'superior to nature.' * The Atheist is a person who walks very strictly by the dictates of 'experience,' and of course possesses all Dr C.'s distaste for such conclusions as are branded in his work with the title of 'speculation,' and 'assumption.'—The mightiest displays of power in nature, are those which are exhibited in the motions of the planetary bodies; but in the miraculous phenomena which Dr C. submits to the examination of his Atheist, it cannot be maintained that power is displayed equal in extent to that by which the planetary motions are effected. The Atheist is therefore not obliged to conclude the existence of 'a power *superior* to nature.' That the phenomena submitted to him, carry in themselves *legitimate* evidence of the existence of an Almighty Being, is by no means questioned; but we deny that such evidence can be apparent to this negative Atheist. Let it be remembered, that he has 'no previous conceptions' upon the subject of Deity. There may be one God, or there may be many; and

* The principles of Hume and of Dr C. inevitably lead to the universal conclusion drawn by the former—that 'the effect is 'the measure of the power.'

of the character belonging to Him or them, he has not the most remote conception. He is equally ready to embrace all opinions upon the subject; and determined to embrace no opinion without 'satisfying and appropriate evidence.' We therefore deny, that even upon the admission we have now made, the Atheist can obtain from the phenomena in question, evidence on which to build any farther conclusion than that a power somewhere exists, capable of controlling, *at particular times, some of nature's laws.* But whether this power is the same with that to which nature's processes may be referrible;—whether it is the attribute of a Being superior upon the whole, or inferior, to Him who may be engaged in conducting these processes—whether the Being operating miraculous phenomena is of moral character—benevolent or malignant—in alliance with the power which regulates nature, or hostile to that power:—all these are questions, of which the negative Atheist can find no satisfactory solution in the phenomena before him,—and which remain to him involved in total obscurity.

Having thus ascertained the conclusion, beyond which it is impossible that the argument from miracles can carry the Atheist,—let us ex-

amine whether the obvious deficiency of evidence afforded by that argument, is supplied by the *testimony* of 'the ostensible agent in 'all these wonderful transactions.'—It is not necessary at present to dispute the position, that the principles of this Atheist, unlike those of his predecessor which we formerly investigated, admit of his placing confidence in human testimony. It must be remembered, however, that it is *solely* from experience that he derives this confidence. He acknowledges no other principle on which faith in testimony is founded. He 'has experience of man, but he has no experience of God,' nor of any rational being different in any respect from mere man. He cannot, in consistency with his principles, form the least conception of the credibility due to testimony, emitted by any being of different constitution, prompted by different motives, or impelled by different powers from those of which he has had experience. What, then, is the testimony to him, of a personage declaring himself to be the Son of God, who was with God, and who is God? Or of men declaring themselves impelled by the influence of divine inspiration? It is obvious that he is, incapacitated from attaching any value to testimony of this sort. 'He

‘ cannot bring his antecedent information into ‘ play upon this question,’ any more than upon the question of the divine character. Proceeding strictly, as the principles he holds oblige him to do, upon *experience*, he can form no judgment of the character, sentiments, and designs of such persons, from any ‘ natural signs’ of qualities, which he may have found to be trustworthy in the case of man : for the persons from whom this testimony proceeds, possess powers and qualities of very different nature from any with which his experience has made him conversant.

But it may be alleged, that the persons emitting this testimony were in outward appearance mere men : they at first represented themselves in no other light :—and in no other capacity does Dr C. represent them to the Atheist. Suppose we should accept of this representation, and admit, that upon this footing their testimony may be held credible by the Atheist : what effect upon his faith will be produced by the information which he must subsequently receive, that the intellectual character of ‘ the ‘ ostensible agents’ is in fact such, as had it been previously known, must have precluded him from giving credit to their testimony ?—

And what a view is here given to us of Christian testimony, when it appears necessary to conceal an important part of the character of the witnesses, in order that conviction may be produced in the mind of one who is 'in a high state of preparation' for receiving it?— —But leaving these, and other objections against the competency of the Atheist's understanding to receive conviction,—let us suppose that he has found reason to infer from the miraculous phenomena, the existence of a power in certain respects superior to nature; and to believe from the testimony of the witnesses, that the doctrine they were about to promulgate is derived from that power. Here, according to Dr C.'s theory of evidence, the exhibition of the 'credentials' is concluded. These are the only particulars, of which, according to him, human reason is entitled to judge. The whole 'information' given by the witnesses,—the doctrine they teach respecting the character and proceedings of the power from whom they derive their commission,—and the intimations they give of the relations in which men stand to Him, form, according to our author, no part of the evidence: and for the best reason possible. If the 'information,' or any part of it, enters into the compo-

sition of the evidence, it must be submitted to reason, and must be judged of according to the principles of reason ; consequences which re-admit the discussion of all those deistical objections excluded by Dr C., and subvert his whole scheme of evidence. He is therefore at great pains to exclude the doctrines taught by the witnesses, from falling in any shape under the cognizance of reason. ‘ After we have established Christianity to be ‘ an authentic message from God, upon these ‘ historical grounds,—when the reason and ‘ experience of man entitle him to form his ‘ conclusions,—nothing remains for us but an ‘ unconditional surrender of the mind to the ‘ subject of the message. We have a right to ‘ sit in judgment over the *credentials* of Heaven’s ambassador, but we have no right to ‘ sit in judgment over the *information* he gives ‘ us.’ * The ‘ information given by Heaven’s ‘ ambassador,’ forms therefore no part of the ‘ credentials ;’ and can form no part of them without subverting Dr C.’s system, and frustrating its object.—The Atheist then has become a believer in Christianity :—that is, he now believes, upon the only legitimate evidence which Christianity, according to

Dr. C. possesses,—that there exists a power in some respects superior to nature, and that ‘the ostensible agent,’ is commissioned by that power,—and he is now prepared to give full credit to whatever information that agent may give him. Let it be remembered, that he has no knowledge of the *character* of that power by whom the ‘agent’ is employed. He has no ‘previous conceptions’ on the subject. He has derived no information from the ‘agent;’ and cannot consider his information as a *ground of faith*, even had it been already communicated. He has no reason to *believe* that the *agent* is not himself deceived. He believes therefore in the truth of a ‘message’ of which he knows nothing, *because* that message is sent by a ‘power’ of whose *supremacy* he knows nothing,—of whose relation to man as his Creator or Governor he knows nothing,—and of whose moral character he has no conception. ‘Though
‘the power which presided there, should be
‘an arbitrary, an unjust, or a malignant Being, all this may startle a Deist, but it will not
‘prevent a consistent Atheist from acquiescing in any legitimate inference, to which
‘the miracles of the gospel, viewed in the
‘simple light of historical facts, may chance

‘to carry to him.’* Now, the ‘*legitimate inference*’ to which these facts have *chanced* to ‘carry’ the Atheist, is this,—that a ‘message’ sent by a ‘Power which may be a malignant Being,’ is *certainly true*, for no other reason than *that it is sent by such a Power*. This ‘consistent Atheist,’ who has so strong a distaste for every thing that bears the character of ‘speculation’—who in all the conclusions he forms, walks rigidly by ‘the light of experience,’—who rejects the argument for the existence of God founded on appearances of design in nature, because ‘the phenomena sit so loose and unconnected with that Intelligent Being to whom they have been referred as their origin, that he does not feel himself entitled from these phenomena, to ascribe any existence, any character, any attributes, or any method of administration to such a Being,’ †—this ‘consistent’ personage ‘chances’ now to admit it as a ‘legitimate inference,’ that a message must be true, because it is sent by one who may be ‘a malignant Being!’—The inference, however, whether legitimate or not, is made;—the ‘credentials’ are found complete;—and the convert is now, and not till now,

* § 181.

† Ibid.

prepared for the enunciation of the doctrines; the nature and character of which, it is to be observed, are excluded from every degree of influence whether prospective or retrospective upon his faith. Among the doctrines now communicated to the convert, are the 'attributes' of the 'Power' or 'Being,' by whom 'the ostensible agent' is commissioned. Of these, the first which is declared by Dr. C. is Veracity. We have all along omitted any inquiry into the process by means of which this peculiarly constructed personage may have acquired moral ideas: Although (as may afterwards appear,) it might have been shewn that the annunciation of veracity, justice, mercy, as the attributes of this Being, could inscribe no idea whatever on 'the blank surface' of this convert's mind, and that such qualities could appear to him in no other light than that of 'nonentities of the imagination.' We admit, however, that he is capable of annexing the appropriate idea to the term veracity. But there is, by supposition, no previous probability apparent to the convert, why veracity, rather than its opposite, should be the characteristic quality of the 'Power' in question: and we are at perfect liberty to

suppose that the attribute announced is *Deceit*. Yet after the annunciation of deceit as the leading attribute, the faith of the 'consistent 'Atheist' remains, and *according to Dr C.'s principles must remain, unshaken.*—Such is the 'understanding,' which is declared by this advocate of revelation, 'to be in a high state 'of preparation for taking in Christianity!'

CHAP. II.

THE DEISTICAL OBJECTIONS WHICH DR C. AIMS AT REMOVING BY A NEW AND SUMMARY METHOD, STILL REMAIN TO BE DISCUSSED AND REPELLED IN THE MANNER HE DEEMS SUPERFLUOUS.

IF the consequences now traced from the principles held by Dr. C. are legitimate, it may seem of little importance to enquire whether that class of infidel objections, which it is his aim to repel without the 'superfluous' trouble of discussing their 'reasonableness,' are in reality removed or not by his system of Christian Evidence. Such an enquiry, may notwithstanding be useful, for confirming the Internal Evidence, with those 'antecedent' theological conclusions on which it is founded, as it may serve still further to ex-

hibit the inconsistency of those reasonings which have for their object its subversion.

From the nature of the general principles advanced by Dr. C., it might seem that if these principles are sound, no ground is left on which to build objections directed against the character of a revelation which is supported by external evidence. This is very far, however, from being the case. When these principles are accurately examined, and the limitations to which our author subjects them are attended to, it will be found that almost all the objections which it is his aim to dismiss without examination, may fairly claim, even from him, a discussion of their ‘reasonableness.’

1. The sweeping aphorism, repeatedly expressed in such terms as these:—‘We have no right to sit in judgment over the information given us by Heaven’s ambassador,’*—is subjected to the following exception: ‘it is very true that if the truths which he delivered lay within the field of *human observation*, he brings himself under the tribunal of our antecedent knowledge.—Were he to tell us, that the bodies of the planetary system moved in orbits which are purely circular, we would oppose to him the observa-

* § 192.

'tions and measurements of astronomy.'* Here Dr. C. asserts, that whatever may be the conclusiveness of the external evidences, or the 'credentials,' as he stiles them, of 'Heaven's 'ambassador;'—yet if the information he gives is contradicted by the results of *human observations*, that circumstance justifies *opposition* to his dictates. It is impossible to understand his words as conveying any other meaning. And the astronomical fact which he produces in illustration of his position, warrants the conclusion, that such opposition is in his opinion justifiable when grounded upon results, which are not very obviously or directly the dictates of mere observation.—In consequence of thus limiting his general principle, Dr. C. is precluded from summarily dismissing, by a reference to the strength of the external evidence, certain objections which have actually been brought against the divine authority of Revelation. Thus he is obliged to admit, that the objections of Bolingbroke and others, founded on the alleged falsehood of the information given by Revelation, respecting the motions of the planetary bodies, are sufficient if well founded to warrant opposition to its reception. All such objections

* § 192.

must, even upon his system, be met upon the ordinary ground of their truth and reasonableness. Again he declares, that 'were he (the ambassador of Heaven,) to tell us, that 'we were perfect men, because we were free 'from passion, and loved our neighbours as 'ourselves, we would oppose to him the *history* of our lives, and the deeply seated *consciousness* of our own imperfections.'* Here it is admitted that memory and consciousness, no less than the powers of perception, are trust-worthy faculties: and that if their dictates are contradicted by information, contained in a religious system supported by external evidence, legitimate ground is furnished for opposition to that system. Hence all objections which allege that revealed religion gives false information regarding the moral constitution of mankind, and the extent of human corruption, must still be discussed in the accustomed manner by reference to facts and to consciousness.—Supposing a revelation to inform us, that a conviction of its truth is highly favourable to the temporal happiness of man:—such objections as allege that this revelation is in fact destructive of the peace of the individual, subversive of the order of so-

* § 192.

ciety, and in many respects hostile to human happiness, are sufficient if well founded to justify opposition to its reception, and must be made the subject of ‘controversy.’—Supposing such a revelation to inform us that its doctrines are highly favourable to the advancement of human virtue—while it is objected by infidels that their effect on the contrary is, to give a loose to vicious propensities—it must be admitted that to discuss the merits of this objection in the ordinary way, is neither ‘superfluous’ nor ‘uncalled for.’

2. It is indispensibly necessary to the support of Dr C.’s theory of evidence, that human reason should be adjudged incapable of forming *any* trust-worthy conclusions, respecting the existence, character, or procedure of the ‘invisible God:’ because, if any such conclusions can in the absence of Revelation be formed, they must be admitted to furnish an insuperable obstacle to the reception of any pretended revelation which contradicts them. Supposing a case to happen, in which theological conclusions of a legitimate nature formed by unassisted reason, are contradicted by a pretended revelation supported by satisfactory external evidence—in such a case,

entire scepticism must be the consequence. This, however, it may be said, is an impossible supposition. But *why*, we ask, is it an impossible supposition? The answer seems to be, that no power, no intelligence, can make each of two propositions true, which human reason, in its legitimate exercise, finds contradictory to each other. This axiom, however, is unfounded, unless the distinction between truth and falsehood is one which is not merely *apparent to human reason*, but founded *in the nature of things*. And if such a distinction exists in the nature of things, we have an affinity established between human reason and the highest possible intelligence, which undoubtedly affords support to certain theological conclusions. The above supposition cannot be pronounced impossible;—the case supposed cannot be considered as ‘legitimately carrying us the length of scepticism,’*—it cannot be considered as neutralizing the claims of the revelation,—without admitting that if an intelligent First Cause exists, his intellectual character *must in certain respects be the same* with that which he has bestowed on human beings.—Thus it would seem that conceptions of the character of Deity, are furnished by those very principles

* of 147.

upon which the conclusion must be supported that no such conceptions can be formed.

But the principle that human reason is incapable of forming any true conceptions of the character or procedure of the Deity, is restricted within a still narrower field of operation, by an admission already brought into view.—Dr C. alludes to miracles as constituting ‘ a special mark’ or ‘ watch-word which ‘ we *previously knew* could be given by none ‘ but God :’*—and it has been shewn, that this previous knowledge is indispensibly necessary, in order to render miracles conclusive evidence of a commission from the Supreme Author of nature. The knowledge here ascribed to man, is more extensive than may on a cursory view be supposed. It embraces these among other points—that no unintelligent principle can operate according to any other laws than those which regulate the present system of things on this globe—that there are no beings superior to man, excepting God, capable of suspending certain laws of nature—and that it is contrary to reason to suppose that two or more divine Principles or Intelligences, of the same or opposite moral character, share the government of the universe.—By what means we may in the absence of Revelation

attain all this knowledge, after we have been persuaded to 'disown natural religion' as 'a speculative system,' and to acknowledge that 'there is nothing perhaps more *thoroughly* 'beyond the cognizance of the human faculties than the truths of religion and the ways 'of that mighty and invisible Being who is 'the object of it,' it is for Dr C. to point out. The *fact*, however, that by the exercise of reason, or by some other means, we actually possess all this knowledge, he asserts: and not only asserts, but produces in the above passage, as constituting the foundation of the argument from miracles, and as entering of course into the composition of the legitimate evidence of Christianity. But as human 'reason has a right to sit in judgment' over every thing offered in the shape of evidence,—every thing forming part of the 'credentials,'—it follows that all objections to the theological conclusions above stated, must be discussed at the bar of reason. Hence notwithstanding his dismissal of natural theology as superfluous if not injurious to the interests of Christianity, Dr C. must find that he is still bound to sustain, *on principles of reason*, some of her most important conclusions. He must either acknowledge that he

has brought forward evidence which upon his own principles is fallacious, or be prepared to advocate the cause of natural religion by shewing, that material principles or elements possess no real power or energy, or at least that they can operate according to no other laws than those which presently regulate the world which we inhabit : points which involve the discussion of all those atheistical hypotheses, which in ancient and modern times have been proposed, to account for the origin of the universe. He must be prepared to expose the errors of those who have ascribed not only to the Supreme Being, but to subordinate spirits the power of operating supernatural effects ; and to examine and overthrow all those sophistical reasonings by which modern infidels have maintained the Manichean doctrine.—These are discussions which, according to his own shewing, cannot be classed under the title of ‘superfluous controversy.’

3. Dr C. seems aware that it is necessary to the support of his system of Christian evidence, that all *moral distinctions* naturally perceptible to man, as well as *theological conclusions* which his reason is capable of forming, should possess no other character than that of ‘speculation,’ ‘assumption,’

‘taste,’ ‘fancy:’—because if such distinctions possess a necessary and universal character, they must come ‘into play’ (according to his expression) when the credibility of Revelation is under discussion.—If these moral distinctions are illusory,—if they exist only relatively to human intellect and condition,—then we are not entitled from our perception of them to predicate of the Deity any moral attributes: nor to hesitate about receiving an offered revelation, on account of any qualities which it may ascribe to Him. If on the other hand, the moral distinctions perceptible by us, exist in the nature of things,—if they are eternal, universal, and immutable;—it follows irresistibly that no external evidence whatever can give credibility to a revelation which ascribes immoral qualities or acts to the Supreme Being.—But the former supposition carries in its train a very formidable difficulty. If these moral perceptions of ours are fallacious—if they do not inform us of an *eternal* and *immutable* distinction between right and wrong—where is it possible to find a foundation, on which any divine revelation may build a claim to conviction or obedience?—Not certainly upon the moral qualities of the Being from whom

it proceeds : because by supposition the moral distinctions we are previously acquainted with, are either wholly illusory, or such as respect only the sentiments and actions of man. Is it replied, that the revelation itself informs us of the existence of moral perfections in the character of the Being from whom it proceeds? The reply is not only subversive of Dr C.'s system, which excludes the information afforded by revelation from forming any part of the evidence, but is a palpable *petitio principii*. For why do we give credit to this information? Because it is communicated to us by a Being of all moral perfection. The reply therefore assigns as the foundation of our belief in the moral perfections of God,—our belief in his moral perfections.—Is it alleged that this belief is founded on the external evidence?—This is also reasoning in a circle : for the external evidence, as has already been shewn, is inconclusive unless founded on the same principle.—Nay, it is farther obvious, that to those who question the immutability and universality of moral distinctions perceptible by man,—it is in vain that revelation proffers information respecting the veracity, justice, goodness, or other moral attributes of God.

For, if these qualities as they exist in other beings, may be *essentially different* from what they are as they exist in man—if they are in their nature resolvable into their opposites, into each other, or into any other qualities whatsoever—it follows that when attributes are predicated of the Supreme Being, under the terms veracity, justice, &c. no information whatever is conveyed to man; revelation has no basis of truth whereon to rest; and the terms in which she describes the moral character of the Deity are unintelligible.*

As it seems impossible, then, to conduct an argument, which has for its object the establishment of the authority of revelation, without admitting the immutability of moral distinctions perceived by the human faculties;—it may be readily supposed that such admissions, however fatal to Dr C.'s scheme of evidence, will be virtually made

* 'The immutability of moral distinctions has been called in question, not only by sceptical writers, but by some philosophers who have adopted their doctrine with the pious design of magnifying the perfections of the Deity. Such authors certainly do not recollect, that what they add to his power and majesty, they take away from his moral attributes; for if moral distinctions be not immutable and eternal, it is absurd to speak of the goodness or of the justice of God.'—STEWART'S *Outlines of Moral Philosophy*.

in the course of his work. Accordingly we have the following passage.—‘ A message
 ‘ has come to us bearing on its forehead every
 ‘ character of authenticity ; and is it right now
 ‘ that every question of our faith or of our du-
 ‘ ty should be committed to the capricious
 ‘ variations of this man’s taste or of that man’s
 ‘ fancy ?’* Although the terms ‘ taste’ and
 ‘ fancy’ are here used, the scope of our au-
 thor’s reasoning evidently is, to disqualify the
 intellectual and moral faculties of man, from
 forming any judgment of matters of faith or
 duty proposed to him by Revelation : and
 the argument consists of an appeal to *reason*
 and *conscience* in proof of its conclusiveness !
 Passing over the singular structure of this ar-
 gument—let us attend to the nature of the
 sentiment appealed to. ‘ Is it *right*,’ to sub-
 mit matters of faith and duty composing a di-
 vine revelation, to the judgment of man ?—
 Why is such a proceeding *right* or *wrong* ?—
 No other reason can be given, than that we
 perceive it to be so : and if it be denied that
 we perceive an *immutable* distinction between
 right and wrong, we can give no judgment on
 the appeal, and the question remains unsolv-
 ed. For, 1st, in regard to matters of *faith*.—
 A revelation resting its sole claim to reception

on the authority of a Superior Being, cannot possibly command the assent of rational creatures, although accompanied with the most ample demonstrations of power, unless it has been previously ascertained that knowledge and veracity also are his attributes. Power may enforce *obedience*—and various considerations may determine rational beings to yield that obedience which is required. But the production of *conviction* is not the object of power.—As the veracity, therefore, of the Superior Being never can be proved without acknowledging the immutability of the moral distinctions perceived by us; so information, the truth of which rests solely on this authority, never can consistently become the object of faith, in the mind of one who denies the immutability of those distinctions.—*2d*, In regard to matters of *duty* or obedience:—had the question been, Is it *prudent* to hesitate about obeying injunctions issued by a Superior Being of great power, until we are made acquainted with his character and claims, &c. ?—such a question might have been resolved in the negative, without any reference to the immutability of moral distinctions. But the question, ‘*Is it right?*’ is capable of no such solution:—(or if the term ‘*right*’ is understood in that

loose sense in which it is in common language sometimes used, as synonymous with *prudent*—the solution alluded to, it may be observed, is attended with consequences which render it incapable of being employed by any advocate of revelation.*) The question of ‘right’ even as it regards *obedience*, can only be determined by reference to our moral perceptions; and unless it can be shewn that man is under a *moral obligation* to obey the will of a being who, for aught we know, is possessed of no moral character—or who is ‘arbitrary, unjust, and malignant,’—it never can be decided as Dr C. anticipates, without recognizing the immutability of moral distinctions perceived by man.

It has now, it is hoped, been rendered sufficiently apparent, that in this passage our author has acknowledged, (not directly indeed, but by necessary consequence) the immutability of moral distinctions—a principle which forms an insuperable barrier against the admission of every revelation which attributes to the Deity, no moral character; or immoral

* ‘The system which makes virtue a mere matter of prudence, leads to the conclusion, that a being independently and completely happy cannot have any moral perceptions or any moral attributes.’—STEWART’S *Outlines*.

qualities and acts; or which represents him as prescribing services or enjoining actions of immoral nature. As Dr C. has deemed it proper to acknowledge this principle, by entering an appeal to it in proof of his own conclusions, every other conclusion legitimately deducible from it must be acknowledged also. And as consequences flowing from this principle have been assumed into the Evidence of Christianity by Dr C., and employed in producing conviction of its truth,—so other consequences following from it, must be allowed to affect that evidence. While therefore, on the one hand, the correspondence between such consequences, and the Christian system of doctrine and morals, must be held to form legitimate evidence of the truth of that system,—all objections to Christianity on the other, grounded on alleged discrepancy between its doctrines or morals, and this principle with its consequences,—possess a just title to have their merits discussed on the grounds of reason, and cannot be summarily dismissed by reference to the external evidence. Now it happens that the greater part of those objections, which Dr C. is desirous of dismissing in this summary manner, are grounded upon this principle. His appeal to it, therefore, sub-

jects him to the necessity of entering into all those controversies with Deists, respecting the moral character of the Christian system, which he represents as superfluous and uncalled for; the same appeal virtually recognises the legitimacy of the internal evidence, which he disclaims as fallacious; and exhibits his general scheme of Christian Evidence, as founded on principles, by the operation of which it is overthrown.

4. Dr C. represents the unity of mind and purpose ascribed to Jesus Christ, as a 'most striking evidence' of the truth of his religion.* 'We see no shifting of doctrine or sentiment, with a view to accommodate to new and unexpected circumstances.' It follows from the adoption of this evidence, that he must consider all 'shifting of doctrine or sentiment, with a view to accommodate to circumstances,' as affording justifiable ground of opposition to Christianity; an admission which furnishes an additional limitation to his general position, that 'we have no right to sit in judgment over the information given us by Heaven's ambassador.' It hence appears, that reason is entitled thus to sit in judgment, with a view to discover whether, among the inspired publishers of Christianity, any discre-

* § 61.

pancy of 'sentiment' or variation of doctrine is discoverable, for which sinister motives are apparent. Every one knows the attempts which have been made by infidels, particularly by Bolingbroke, Chubb, and their followers, to set in opposition to one another the Gospel of our Saviour, and that of the Apostle Paul. Numerous have been the objections brought against Christianity, founded on alleged discordancy among its doctrines and its precepts. By employing this species of evidence, our Author opens for himself a field of 'controversy,' which his general principles appeared to have shut up. It is not indeed easy to assign limits to this field; or to preclude any of those deistical objections, which represent the doctrines of Christianity as at variance with the conclusions of natural theology, from forcing their way into it. For as all those conclusions are found asserted in certain passages of Scripture, whatever other passages may be considered as expressive of doctrines contradictory to those of natural theology, may be represented as contradictory to doctrines contained in the gospel itself. It seems only necessary therefore to change the form of the objection, and to invent some plausible motive to account for the

alleged inconsistency, in order to enable it to bring forward the charge of 'a shifting of doctrine or sentiment, with a view to accommodate to new or unexpected circumstances:' a shape, which would appear to entitle it to enter the lists of legitimate 'controversy.'

Thus, we cannot find much difficulty in calculating the gain which accrues to Christianity, from this attempt to simplify and render impressive the proofs, on which its claims to reception rest. It would seem that if we express it by the least possible denomination of quantity, we cannot be very wide of the mark.

CHAP. III.

OF THE AFFINITY SUBSISTING BETWEEN THE PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE, EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL,—AND THOSE OF THE INDUCTIVE PHILOSOPHY.

DR C. represents his views of Christian Evidence, as entirely consonant to the principles of the Inductive Philosophy. And in order to exhibit that consonancy, and to evince the applicability of these principles to the investigation of the truth of Christianity, he gives a sketch of the inductive philosophy:—declaring that all he ‘wants is the application of Lord Bacon’s principles to the investigation before us.’*

The only principles or operations which Dr. C. has stated as necessary or admissible, in order to the successful completion of the inductive method, are such as are expressed by the terms ‘experience,’ ‘observation,’ clas-

* § 59.

‘sification,’ or ‘grouping’ of ‘phenomena,’ ‘expressing resemblances in words, and announcing them to the world in the form of ‘general laws.’* ‘A law of the human mind,’ he says, ‘must be only *a series of facts*, reduced to one general description or grouped ‘together.’ † He states it as the duty of a philosopher, ‘not to assert what he *excogitates*.’ ‡ He speaks of collecting ‘the law or ‘character of a process,’ and mentions Newton as announcing the ‘fact and its legitimate consequences.’ ¶ But he nowhere declares that the investigation of causes, either *Efficient* or *Final*, is a subject embraced by the inductive philosophy, or *admissible in consistency with its principles*: and he has left it uncertain, whether *Synthetical* reasoning, as well as the ‘a priori spirit,’ may not have been ‘chased away’ by Lord Bacon ‘from ‘metaphysics.’ ||

There is one feature of Dr. C.’s inductive philosophy which has something of a novel appearance. That facts which are ascertained by testimony, are entitled *no less* than those which have fallen under the personal observation of the inductive philosopher, to form part of the data on which his investigations

* § 152. † § 156. ‡ § 156. ¶ § 163. || § 156.

proceed, is a principle generally acknowledged and universally acted upon. But that he should be obliged to ground his investigation *solely* upon the experience of others, rejecting his own, certainly has the appearance of something new. Yet such seems to be the principle which Dr. C. lays down for the guidance of his inductive philosopher. Having stated experience as the source whence all knowledge is derived, he proceeds to reject all experience, unless that which is conveyed through the channel of testimony; a species of evidence which, according to him, we attach credit to merely from experience. He ‘cannot conceive a more glaring rebellion against the authority of his (Lord Bacon’s) maxims, than for the beings of a day to sit in judgment upon the Eternal, and apply their paltry *experience* to the counsels of his high and unfathomable wisdom.’* He proposes and determines in the negative the question, whether the ‘*experience* of man can lead him to any certain conclusions, as to the character of the divine administration?’†—and he rests every thing upon the ‘credit which should be annexed to the testimony of the Apostles,’‡ which he as-

* § 165.

† § 167, 168.

‡ § 163.

sures us ‘is altogether a question of *experience*.’* Nay, it is a question of *observation*. ‘We are competent to judge of the behaviour of man in given circumstances; this is a subject completely accessible to observation:’—and being ‘precluded by the nature of the subject from the benefit of observation,’ we are precluded from judging of ‘the conduct of the Almighty in given circumstances.’ †

But the more prominent character which Dr C. ascribes to the inductive philosophy, although it possesses no novelty to recommend it, renders insignificant all subordinate attributes with which he invests that philosophy, however new they may be in appearance. It is impossible to render his assertions or reasonings on the subject intelligible, without understanding him as holding the opinion, that experience, in the strict philosophic sense of the term, is the *sole* source from which, in consonance with Lord Bacon’s principles, human knowledge is derived. For if we suppose that he uses the term ‘*experience*,’ in its vague and popular acceptation, his whole argument against the validity of the conclusions of natural religion, falls to the ground: nay his assertion that ‘we have no

* § 168.

† § 170.

‘experience of God,’ is in this sense directly contradicted by the affirmation already quoted from another of his works, that we have experience of God; and is false not merely in the spirit, but the very letter. It is singular, that in adopting this common sceptical maxim, that all our knowledge is entirely derived from experience, in the strict sense of the term, Dr C. did not perceive that he set aside the external evidence of Christianity no less effectually than the internal,—that we have, philosophically speaking, no *experience* of any Efficient Cause, either in miraculous or natural phenomena;—that knowledge of the moral qualities of our fellow-men cannot be derived from mere experience;—that it is not experience which teaches us the intellectual existence of others;—and that therefore we cannot learn from experience solely, that any credit is due to testimony.

But are we bound to believe that the principle here laid down is really recognized by the inductive philosophy? Are we obliged to take our ideas of that philosophy from the Philo* and Demeas of the age, because Dr C.

* ‘Whatever additional plausibility Philo may have lent to the argument of Aristodemus, is derived from the much abused maxim of the inductive logic, “that all our knowledge is entirely derived from experience.” It is curious that Socra-

has adopted some of their sentiments? Have these persons completed a title, to be considered as the depositaries of sound philosophy, and to declare, *ex cathedra*, what is, or is not, compatible with the principles of the inductive logic? If this is a point to be determined by authority, their opinion regarding it stands opposed to that of the highest names in natural and in metaphysical science. If it is to be determined by reasoning, Dr C. ought to have given us something more than assertion and vague declamation. He ought to have shewn how an inductive process may be completed by reasoning,* without having recourse to any other source of knowledge than experience. He ought to have shewn that Bacon and his most eminent disciples disclaim all other sources of knowledge than experience—that they reject the argument from final causes—that they either hold it unphilosophical to refer to efficient causes, or hold that experience informs us of the existence of such causes:—and further, he was bound to have shewn, that not-

‘tes should have touched with such precision on one of the most
‘important exceptions with which this maxim must be received.’
STEWART’S *Elements*.

* By *reasoning*. is here and elsewhere meant, what Dr Campbell and other metaphysicians style ‘the discursive faculty,’ Mr Stewart generally uses the term in the same acceptation.

withstanding the operation of those principles, which overthrow the conclusions of natural theology, Christianity stands yet supported by external evidence. Dr C. has indeed asserted, directly or by consequence, all these points—but he has proved none of them. We have already disproved the last;—we shall now examine the others; shewing at the same time that the conclusions of natural theology with the evidences of Christianity, internal and external, proceed on principles strictly consonant to those of the inductive philosophy.

In pursuing this investigation, there seems a propriety in referring chiefly to an Author, to whom Dr C. attributes in part the banishment of that scholastic spirit which stands opposed to the inductive principle. ‘When by ‘comparing’ says Mr Stewart, ‘a number of ‘cases agreeing in some circumstances, but ‘differing in others, and all attended with the ‘same result, a philosopher connects, as a general law of nature, the event with the *physical cause*, he is said to proceed according to ‘the method of induction.’ ‘When we advance from discovery to discovery, we do ‘nothing more than resolve our former conclusions into others still more comprehensive. Thus Galileo and Torricelli proceeded

‘ in proving that all terrestrial bodies gravitate
‘ towards the earth ; in establishing which
‘ conclusion, they only generalized the law of
‘ gravity, reconciling it with a variety of seem-
‘ ing exceptions. Newton shewed that the
‘ same law of gravity extends to the celestial
‘ spaces, and that the power by which the sun
‘ and moon are retained in their orbits is pre-
‘ cisely similar to that which is manifested in the
‘ fall of a stone.’ ‘ In drawing a general physical
‘ conclusion we are guided by our *instinctive*
‘ expectation of the continuance of the laws
‘ of nature.’ To this instinct, or perceptive
power or faculty, by whatever name distin-
guished, by the operation of which this un-
doubted expectation is produced, Dr Reid
gave the name of the ‘ inductive principle.’—
‘ The evidence for the continuance of those
‘ laws which have been found, in the course
‘ of our past experience, to regulate the suc-
‘ cession of phenomena, is *intuitive*. Such
‘ truths no man ever thinks of stating to him-
‘ self in the form of propositions ; but all our
‘ conduct, and all our reasonings, proceed on
‘ the supposition that they are admitted. The
‘ belief of them is necessary for the preserva-
‘ tion of our animal existence, and it is ac-

‘ cordingly coeval with the first operations of ‘ the intellect.’* Thus we find that in the connection of effects with their *physical* causes, the simplest process of induction requires, in order to its completion, the existence of *evidence furnished by another source* than experience. Experience informs us of the regular operation of the laws of nature in time past—but it informs us of nothing more. We may say that experience teaches us that the sun will rise to-morrow; but *how* does it teach us? Only through the medium of that ‘instinct’ or ‘principle,’ from which we derive evidence of the continuance of the laws of nature. To say that we have experience, in Dr C.’s sense of the term, of the sun’s rising to-morrow, would be downright absurdity.

Finding that evidence furnished by experience alone, will not serve to complete the simplest process of induction, without resorting to evidence furnished by the constitution of our minds—we now appeal to that constitution as affording evidence of the existence of efficient causes. If simple experience will not answer the purposes of induction even in the investigation of *physical* causes, but must call in the aid of intuitive evidence; it is hop-

* STEWART’S *Outlines*.

ed that the exclusive patrons of experience will find no reason for objecting to our calling in the assistance of the same sort of evidence, in our investigation of causes properly *efficient*. Certainly the expectation entertained of the continuance of the laws of nature, whether that expectation owes its origin to the operation of a *principle of common sense*, of an *instinct*, or (since these terms are disliked) of a *fundamental law of belief*, an *element of reason*, or *the constitution of the human mind*,—that expectation, whencesoever it may originate, is not more general and undoubted than the belief that every change is and must be produced by the mediate or immediate operation of an Efficient Cause somewhere existing. If this belief is rejected notwithstanding its universality, and in the face of the greatest absurdities legitimately following from its rejection,—it would be a vain attempt to endeavour by reasoning to re-establish it. No resource in such a case remains, but an appeal to authority. Although we cannot propose to convince by reasoning, the person who rejects this belief as irrational or unphilosophical, we may at least shew by the production of authorities, that if his notions of reason and philosophy

are sound, then those men who rank highest as the distinguished possessors of reason and philosophy, have been grossly deficient in both.—Reid and Stewart, whom Dr C. does not deem unacquainted with the principles of the Baconian philosophy, have both represented the proposition, ‘that every thing which begins to exist must have a cause,’ as belonging to the class of first principles, which form an essential part of the human constitution,—and as forming one of the premises from which the existence of a Deity is legitimately inferred. It is not likely that the inductive philosophy, if its principles are irreconcilable with the conclusion that changes must be operated by efficient causes, should owe its origin to the writer of the following passages—‘While the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them and go no farther. But when it beholdeth the chain of them confederate and linked together, *it must needs fly to Providence and Deity.*’—‘Philosophy, like Jacob’s vision, discovers to us a ladder, the top of which reaches to the footstool of the throne of God.’—But Dr C. tells us that ‘Lord Bacon pointed out the method of true philosophising; yet in prac-

‘ tice he abandoned it :’ and from the practice of the master, he appeals to that of the disciple. ‘ Sir Isaac Newton,’ says he, ‘ completed in his own person the character of the true philosopher. He not only saw the general principle, but he obeyed it.’ In this high encomium we cheerfully acquiesce : and we add, that while he saw ‘ the general principles’ of the Baconian philosophy and obeyed them,—no man ever saw more clearly the particular principle we are now maintaining, or obeyed it more submissively. This great master of the inductive method, did not merely deem the inference of efficient causes from physical effects, admissible ;—he considered it as the great end of natural philosophy to trace up effects to their ultimate Efficient Cause. ‘ *The main business of natural philosophy,*’ according to Newton’s view of the subject, ‘ is to argue from phenomena, without feigning hypotheses, and to deduce causes from effects, till we come to the *very First Cause, which certainly is not mechanical.*’

It may seem superfluous to argue the validity of that species of evidence which ascertains the character of efficient causes from the nature and character of effects : since the greatest masters of the inductive philosophy

have treated the rejection of this evidence as indicating a depravation of intellect which is proof against all reasoning. Bacon's sentiments on this subject have been grossly misrepresented: and the charge of rejecting the argument from final causes, still continues to be made against him by French philoosophers and their disciples;—but he has been triumphantly vindicated from the charge by Mr Stewart: who after citing the authorities of Boyle, M'Laurin, and Newton * in favour of the validity of this argument, adds—‘ in multiplying these quotations I am well aware

* With these, the following more recent authority may without impropriety be ranked.

‘ This accurate compensation of the inequalities of the planetary motions, depends on three conditions, belonging to the primitive and original constitution of the system. There three conditions do not *necessarily* arise out of the nature of motion or gravitation, or from the action of any physical cause with which we are acquainted. Neither can they be considered as arising from chance; for the probability is almost infinite to one, that without a cause particularly directed to that object, such a conformity would not have arisen in the motions of thirty-one different bodies scattered over such a vast extent.—The only explanation therefore that remains is, *that all this is the work of intelligence, and design directing the original constitution of the system, and impressing such motions on the parts as were calculated to give stability to the whole.*’ PLAYFAIR'S *Outlines*, Vol. II.

‘ that authorities are not arguments ; but when
‘ a prejudice to which authority alone has
‘ given currency, is to be combated, what
‘ other refutation is likely to be effectual?’
Perhaps, however, our author may contend,
that the very circumstance of acknowledging
the validity of the argument from final causes,
is sufficient to shew that these distinguished
persons were lamentably ignorant of the true
principles of the inductive philosophy ;—and
that the rejection of this argument is the only
sound test of acquaintance with the true me-
thod of philosophising.—It may seem that if
we admit this test, we are effectually deprived
of all support from authority :—for in order
to prove that genuine inductive philosophers
have admitted the validity of this argument,
we must shew that it is recognised as sound
by those who have rejected it as fallacious.
This however is no such difficulty as it may
seem to be. All we are called upon to do, is
to shew that those who argue against first
principles contradict themselves—which is a
thing they never fail to do :—a thing which it
is indeed impossible for them to avoid. Ac-
cepting this somewhat unusual test, the first
authority we shall produce is that of Mr Hume :
the second that of Dr Chalmers.—After the

strength of Philo's scepticism has expended itself, in all the wild extravagancies which his unbridled imagination can suggest ;—after he has banished Demea, and has begun to experience the return of common sense ;—he is at length pleased to express himself in the following manner. ‘ A purpose, an intention, ‘ a design, every where strikes the most care- ‘ less, the most stupid thinker ; and no man ‘ can be so hardened in absurd systems, as at ‘ all times to reject it. That nature does no- ‘ thing in vain, is a maxim established in all ‘ the schools, merely from the contemplation ‘ of the works of nature, without any religious ‘ purpose ; and from a firm conviction of its ‘ truth, an anatomist, who had observed a new ‘ organ or canal, would never be satisfied, till ‘ he had also discovered *its use and intention*. ‘ One great foundation of the Copernican sys- ‘ tem is the maxim, that nature acts by the sim- ‘ plest methods, and chuses the most proper ‘ means to any end ; and astronomers often, ‘ without thinking of it, lay this strong founda- ‘ tion of piety and religion. The same thing is ‘ observable in other parts of philosophy : ‘ and thus all the sciences lead us insensibly ‘ to acknowledge a first intelligent Author ; ‘ and their authority is often so much the

' greater, as they do not directly profess that
 ' intention. The farther we advance in ana-
 ' tomical researches, we discover new scenes
 ' of art and wisdom, and if the infidelity of
 ' Galen, even when these natural sciences were
 ' still imperfect, could not withstand such strik-
 ' ing appearances, to what pitch of pertinaci-
 ' ous obstinacy must a philosopher in this age
 ' have attained, who can now doubt of a Su-
 ' preme Intelligence?' When Dr Chalmers'
 scheme of Christian Evidence has apparently
 escaped from his memory; after he has banish-
 ed all idea of the fallacy and pernicious ten-
 dency of the internal evidence; and has be-
 taken himself to the establishment of the au-
 thority of the Gospel, and the reasonableness
 of its doctrines, on the ground of ' experience
 of God,' and the conclusions of natural theo-
 logy;—he expresses himself after this fashion.
 ' When I look abroad on the wondrous scene
 ' that is immediately before me,—and see
 ' that in every direction, it is a scene of the
 ' most various and unwearied activity,—and
 ' expatiate on all the beauties of that garniture
 ' by which it is adorned, and on all the *prints*
 ' of *design* and of *benevolence* which abound in
 ' it,—and think that the same God, who holds
 ' the universe, with its every system, in the

‘ hollow of his hand, pencils every flower, and
‘ gives nourishment to every blade of grass,
‘ and actuates the movements of every living
‘ thing, and is not disabled by the weight of
‘ his other cares from enriching the humble
‘ department of nature I occupy, with charms
‘ and accommodations of the most unbounded
‘ variety—then surely, if a message bearing
‘ every mark of authenticity, should profess
‘ to come to me from God, and inform me of
‘ his mighty doings for the happiness of our
‘ species, it is *not* for me, *in the face of all this*
‘ *evidence*, to reject it as a tale of imposture,
‘ because astronomers have told me,’ &c. ‘ It
‘ is a wonderful thing that God should be so
‘ unincumbered by the concerns of a whole uni-
‘ verse, that he can give a constant attention
‘ to every moment of every individual in this
‘ world’s population. But wonderful as it is,
‘ you do not hesitate to admit it as true, on the
‘ *evidence* of your own *recollections*. It is a
‘ wonderful thing that he whose eye is at every
‘ instant on so many worlds, should have peo-
‘ pled the world we inhabit with all the traces
‘ of the varied *design* and *benevolence* which a-
‘ bound in it. But, great as the wonder is, you
‘ do not allow so much as the shadow of impro-
‘ bability to darken it, for its reality is what

‘you actually *witness*, and you never think of questioning the *evidence of observation*.’*

In these passages, our author, it will be observed, asserts that there are in nature numerous ‘prints,’ or ‘traces’ furnishing ‘evidence,’ not merely of ‘design,’ or intelligence, but of ‘benevolence’ in the Deity. This is a point of some consequence; as it places the authority of Dr C. (when not writing systematically upon Christian Evidence) in opposition to that of certain infidel authors, who admitting that there are found in nature conclusive evidences of intelligence and power, deny that from any source accessible to human research, we can derive legitimate evidence of the moral character of the Deity. The admission, however, of the argument from final causes, as conclusive in regard to the natural attributes of Deity is fatal to the rejection of it in the case of his moral attributes †. The evidence is in principle precisely the same,—and although in certain respects more abstruse and complex, is far from being inferior in amount. The premises are in both cases drawn from what we ‘experience,’ either within us or without, and the process by which the conclusion is reached in

* Chal. Astrom. Disc. III.

† See Warburton’s Examination of Bolingbroke, Div. Leg. App. Vol. I.

both cases is strictly inductive. *—As Dr C. has mentioned the writings of Mr Stewart, as having ‘contributed much to bring the science of mind under the entire dominion of the inductive philosophy,’—these writings may be fairly referred to as furnishing evidence, regarding the consistency of the argument in favour of the moral perfections and government of the Deity, with the principles of that philosophy.—‘Our ideas’ then, (according to Mr S.) ‘of the moral attributes of God *must* be derived from our own moral perceptions. It is *only by attending to these, that we can form a conception* of what his attributes are; and it is in this way that we are furnished with

* The term, ‘a priori,’ has been applied to reasonings of so different nature, that it is difficult to fix any definite character to it. It has become in the hands of Dr C. and of other writers, a term of reproach, denoting mere assumption or hypothesis.—Perhaps the mathematical form, in which arguments for the existence and attributes of the Deity, proceeding on data furnished chiefly by our intellectual and moral perceptions, have been sometimes put,—has contributed to the continued use of this term. The same circumstance has, I conceive, been productive of a worse effect. By thus assuming a rank which they are not entitled to hold; and aiming at strict demonstration, an object they can never reach; arguments of this sort have lost, in general estimation, that sound and conclusive character which properly belongs to probable evidence of the highest class,—a character which they are in their own nature fully qualified to sustain.

‘ *the strongest proofs* that they really belong
‘ to him.’ ‘ The distinction between right and
‘ wrong, is *apprehended by the mind to be eter-*
‘ *nal and immutable no less than the distinc-*
‘ *tion between mathematical truth and false-*
‘ *hood. To argue, therefore, from our own*
‘ *moral judgments to the administration of the*
‘ *Deity, cannot be justly censured as a rash ex-*
‘ *tension to the divine nature, of suggestions*
‘ *resulting from the arbitrary constitution of*
‘ *our own minds.*’ ‘ The ultimate appeal
‘ must be always made to the moral sentiments
‘ and emotions of the human race.’ ‘ The sen-
‘ timent of Publius Syrus, ‘ *omne dixeris male-*
‘ *dictum, quum ingratum hominem dixeris,*’
‘ speaks a language which accords with every
‘ feeling of an unperverted mind; it speaks
‘ the language of nature, which it is the pro-
‘ vince of the moralist *not* to criticise, but to
‘ listen to.’ ‘ To act in conformity to our
‘ sense of rectitude, is plainly the highest ex-
‘ cellence which our nature is capable of at-
‘ taining, *nor can we avoid* extending the same
‘ rule of estimation to all intelligent beings
‘ whatever. Besides these conclusions with
‘ respect to the Divine attributes, (which seem
‘ to be implied in our very perception of mo-
‘ ral distinctions,) there are others perfectly

‘agreeable to them, which continually force
‘themselves on the mind, in the exercise of
‘our moral judgments, both with respect to
‘our own conduct and that of other men. The
‘reverence which we feel to be due to the
‘admonitions of conscience; the sense of me-
‘rit and demerit which accompanies our good
‘and bad actions; the warm interest we take
‘in the fortunes of the virtuous; the indigna-
‘tion we feel at the occasional triumphs of
‘successful villany; all imply *a secret convic-
‘tion of the moral administration of the uni-
‘verse.* An examination of the ordinary course
‘of human affairs adds to the force of these
‘considerations; and furnishes *a proof from
‘the fact,* that notwithstanding the seemingly
‘promiscuous distribution of happiness and
‘misery in this life, *the reward of virtue and
‘the punishment of vice, are the great objects of
‘all the general laws by which the world is go-
‘verned.*’ The tendency of these laws will be
‘found in every instance favourable to order and
‘to happiness; and it is one of the noblest em-
‘ployments of Philosophy to investigate the be-
‘nificent purposes to which they are subservient.’
Yet notwithstanding this clear exposition of
the natural evidence for the moral character

and administration of God,—notwithstanding this decided assertion of the sound philosophical character of that evidence,—and in the face of encomiums bestowed by himself on the philosophical nature of those very ‘writings’ from which these extracts are taken;—does Dr C. affirm, that all our conclusions regarding the Divine character and administration drawn from such sources are unphilosophical, and ‘of no more value than the fooleries of an ‘infant.’

The points now established, are sufficient to secure the chief conclusions of natural theology, from the charge of inconsistency with the principles of the inductive philosophy. In order to connect these conclusions, with others of a subordinate nature, and with revelation, so as to complete the philosophical character of the internal evidence, all that seems yet remaining to be ascertained is the legitimacy of synthetic reasoning. It is not clear, whether reasoning of this description is admissible according to Dr C.’s philosophy, or whether he means to reject it as animated by the ‘*a priori* spirit.’ However this may be, we shall rest its soundness on the assertion, that it is held legitimate by the eminent masters of the inductive philosophy already re-

ferred to, and on the following passage from the writings of Mr Stewart. ‘It is the peculiar
‘and exclusive prerogative of a system fairly
‘obtained by the method of induction, that
‘while it enables us to arrange facts already
‘known, it furnishes the means of ascertain-
‘ing, by *synthetic reasoning*, those which we
‘have no access to examine by direct obser-
‘vation. The difference among hypothetical
‘theories, is merely a difference of *degree*,
‘arising from the greater or less ingenuity of
‘their authors; whereas legitimate theories
‘are distinguished from all others *radically*
‘and *essentially*; and accordingly, while the
‘former are liable to perpetual vicissitudes,
‘*the latter are as permanent as the laws*
‘*which regulate the order of the universe.*’

From these brief illustrations, the true nature of the inductive philosophy, so far as it regards the subject under consideration, will be sufficiently apparent; as well as the sound and philosophical character of the evidence on which Christianity rests its claims to reception. Consciousness; the external senses; the power of intuition, by which among other truths the existence of efficient causes is ascertained, and the character of such causes

inferred from our perception of *ends* and *uses* in their effects ;—these are the sources, from which the whole evidences of Christianity are ultimately derived. All evidence drawn from these sources, is recognised as legitimate by the greatest masters of the inductive school,—and cannot be questioned without subverting all sound philosophy. What grosser perversion of terms can be imagined, than to characterize conclusions legitimately founded on evidence furnished by these sources, as mere ‘speculations,’ or matters of ‘taste’ and ‘fancy?’ With equal propriety, may the whole of human science be denominated speculation, taste, and fancy; for in the whole circle of science no surer foundation for any one conclusion can be discovered.—From the phenomena of the material world ;—from the intellectual and moral constitution of the human mind ;—from the condition and circumstances of man ;—from our conceptions of space and duration ;—from the idea formed by the human mind of a perfect Self-existent Being ; *—conclu-

* To display at length the evidence of Christianity, tracing up in detail the various proofs composing that evidence to the fundamental principles on which they rest, is not the design of this Essay. Its object is no more than to point out what those

sions which regard the existence, character, and administration of the Great First Cause of all things, may be *legitimately* and *philosophically* drawn. Availing ourselves first of all

principles are, and to vindicate their stability and trustworthiness. In regard to the arguments of Newton and Des Cartes last alluded to, it is obvious that they rest, no less than the reasonings which the term *a posteriori* has been employed to designate, on evidence derived from the sources now shewn to be legitimate. Des Cartes thus states the premises upon which his conclusion is founded. ‘Dum in meipsum mentis aciem
 ‘convertito, non modo *intelligo* me esse rem incompletam, et ab
 ‘alio dependentem, remque ad majora et meliora indefinite as-
 ‘pirantem, sed simul etiam *intelligo* illum, a quo pendeo, ma-
 ‘jora ista omnia non indefinite et potentia tantum, sed re ipsa
 ‘infinite in se habere, atque ita Deum esse,’ &c. Newton’s argument is thus stated by Dr Clarke:—‘Space and time are
 ‘only abstract conceptions of an immensity and eternity, *which*
 ‘*force themselves on our belief*; and as immensity and eter-
 ‘nity are not substances, they must be attributes’ (or as he elsewhere expresses it, ‘modes of existence’) ‘of a Being who
 ‘is necessarily immense and eternal.’ I conceive that the facts which support the conclusion in both cases, are partly to be ascertained by observation, partly by reflection—and that whatever may be the opinion formed of the clearness or conclusiveness of the argument in either case, nothing can be more opposite to the character of hypothetical assumption. ‘The above
 ‘argument (Des Cartes’s) for the existence of God (very im-
 ‘properly called by some foreigners an argument *a priori*) was
 ‘long considered by the most eminent men in Europe as quite
 ‘demonstrative. For my own part, although I do not think it
 ‘is by any means so level to the apprehension of common en-
 ‘quirers, as the argument from the marks of design every where

the sources of knowledge presented to us by nature, we quickly find our inability to understand fully the essence and character of the Deity, or to comprehend the extent and details of his administration. But we also find, that (unless our faculties are radically deceptive, in which case neither reason nor revelation can possibly afford us certain knowledge on any subject whatever,) we have undoubted ground for concluding that a Deity exists—that certain qualities belong to the Divine character—and that certain general principles mark his administration. Thus combining together the natural evidences furnished by the sources above mentioned, we conclude with the fullest assurance, that one Supreme Intelligence has created and arranged all things—that he presides over all—and that wisdom, justice, and

‘manifested in the universe, I am still less inclined to reject it
‘as altogether unworthy of attention. It is far from being so
‘metaphysically abstruse as the reasonings of Newton and
‘Clarke founded on our conceptions of space and time, nor
‘would it perhaps appear less logical and conclusive than that
‘celebrated demonstration, if it were properly unfolded, and
‘stated in more simple and popular terms. The two argu-
‘ments, however, are in no respect exclusive of each other;
‘and I have always thought, that by combining them together,
‘a proof of the point in question might be formed, more im-
‘pressive and luminous than is to be obtained from either, when
‘stated apart.’—STEWART’S *Diss. Encyc. Britt.*

benignity mark his character and government. Should a system of religion claiming divine authority offer itself to our reception, representing the universe as governed by a plurality of deities,—or should it represent the Supreme ‘Being who presides’ over all, as ‘arbitrary, unjust, and malignant,’—we should find no evidence whatever, capable of establishing the claims of such a system to our conviction or obedience.—Christianity offers itself to our acceptance, professing to be a revelation from heaven. It presents to us a new class of phenomena, exhibited in a written record, to which we attend as carefully as to those which are displayed to us in the book of nature. In this new field of investigation, we trace the same characteristic marks of the Divine Being, which we had previously ascertained. Comparing with our former conclusions, the general principles here declared to regulate the divine procedure, we find them to correspond in every respect; what is obscure in the former, is illustrated by the latter; and their mutual harmony serves to verify both.—There are particulars, connected with the general conclusions we have antecedently reached, in regard to which we find no sufficient data within the reach of our unaided faculties, to enable us to form any deter-

minate opinion. On some of these points, revelation gives us full and explicit information, of such a character as harmonizes perfectly with that of the general truths it discloses, and of the theological conclusions of reason. In regard to matters of another kind, we find ourselves compelled by the absurdity of certain propositions, to believe others of an opposite nature, the subjects of which are extremely obscure and incomprehensible in certain particulars; and we find reason to suppose that such subjects are in their nature above the comprehension of our limited faculties. Revelation asserts such propositions to be true, but does not enable us to comprehend in all respects the subjects to which they relate: declaring explicitly in regard to some of them, that they are above the reach of human intellect in its present state. In short, at whatever point we contemplate Christianity, in connection with those theological and moral conclusions which are legitimately drawn from the sources abovementioned;—we find evidence of the soundest and most philosophical kind, that this religious system owes its origin to the same Great Being from whom all things derive their existence and character,—a Being of all wisdom and moral perfection, interposing for the momentous purpose of con-

ducting his rational creatures to sublime happiness.—In all this, (to apply the language of Dr C. to a different subject,) ‘there is no theory, no assumption.’ ‘We do not step beyond the cautious procedure of Lord Bacon’s philosophy.’

Although the principles held by Dr C. and by him attributed to the inductive philosophy, militate not more fatally against the internal evidence than against the external;—there is in truth nothing in the principles of that philosophy rightly understood, which is inconsistent with those on which the latter species of evidence is founded. The argument which establishes the previous presumption in favour of miracles, formerly referred to, being grounded on the dignity of the *end* manifestly contemplated in the constitution of Christianity, proceeds on principles which, as has been now shewn, are fully recognized by that philosophy.* Of the quality of the testimony emit-

* ‘Doth this appear to the Essayist too much like arguing *a priori*, of which I know he hath a detestation? It is just such an argument as presupposing the most rational principles of Deism, results from those maxims concerning intelligent causes and their operations, which are founded in general experience, and which uniformly lead us to expect, that *the end will be proportional to the means*.—CAMPBELL’S *Essay on Miracles*.

ted by the Christian witnesses, we cannot indeed judge from mere 'experience : '—but acknowledging the authority of primary laws of belief, uniformly regulating the procedure of the inductive philosopher,—its full credibility is ascertained.—And furnished with those antecedent conceptions of Deity which natural theology establishes, or permitted to employ the internal evidence,—we are able by a process of induction, equally simple and legitimate, to prove from miracles, in the most conclusive manner, the truth of Christianity.*——Thus, all the chief evidences, on which the Christian revelation rests its claims to acceptance, are found to be of the most legitimate nature. 'The 'argument of the Christian,' as Dr C. affirms, 'is precisely what the maxims of Lord Bacon 'would dispose us to acquiesce in.' And it is only the sceptic who questions, or the atheist who rejects the authority of those laws of belief, by means of which phenomena ascertained by consciousness, sense, testimony, &c. become subservient to the inductive process,—that can properly be considered as beyond the reach of Christian evidence. The inductive philosophy has done much for human science ; and its aspect is no less favourable when view-

* See page 42.

ed in relation to science of an higher description. If it has already brought into contempt all such vain hypotheses as the 'ether and 'whirlpools of Des Cartes'—the time it may be hoped is approaching, when the 'delicious speculations' (as our author terms 'them) of 'Rousseau,' with all those wild and extravagant systems which rear themselves up in opposition to rational evidence and sound Christianity, will share a similar fate.

Dr C. takes particular notice of Butler's analogical argument. He pronounces the author to be 'one of the soundest and most 'philosophical of our theologians: '* yet he 'conceives' such reasonings as Butler's to be founded in 'presumption,' to be 'unphilosophical, and precisely analogous to that theorizing *a priori* spirit, which the wisdom of 'Bacon has banished from all the schools of 'philosophy.' † Taking our ideas of the inductive philosophy, not from the imperfect sketch of it given by Dr C., but from the representations of the best naturalists and metaphysicians of the age; it is not easy to conceive any train of reasoning more strictly philosophical, than that which Butler has employed in sup-

* § 175.

† § 177.

port of Christianity. Adopting as its foundation, those conclusions which natural theology by strict *induction* draws from sources now shewn to be legitimate, the author proceeds to point out *synthetically* the characteristic qualities, which those conclusions lead us to expect in a revelation proceeding from the Creator and Governor of the world; and he shews how conspicuous these qualities are, in the Christian dispensation. The admirable manner in which the argument is conducted;—the extent to which the analogy is traced;—the profound yet clear views of the author;—the closeness of the reasoning;—the wariness with which all the particular arguments are urged, leaving a constant impression on the reader's mind, that each is capable of bearing more weight than is laid upon it,—have justly established the character which Dr C. bestows upon the author. This celebrated argument, Dr. C.'s principles destroy; reducing it to the condition of a mere *argumentum ad hominem*, and restricting its effect to the removal of certain deistical objections. He asserts indeed, that 'it is not so much the object of the author to found *any* positive argument on the accordancy, &c. as to repel the argu-

‘ments founded upon the discordancy.’* The author, it is true, expresses himself on this subject as on others with great caution; but he certainly did not consider the influence of his reasoning as limited to the repelling of objections: much less did he consider himself as ‘presumptuously’ occupying ground, which although sufficient for defence against the enemy to whom he stood opposed, was in its nature untenable and fallacious. ‘The analogy here proposed to be considered is,’ he declares, ‘of pretty large extent, and consists of several parts; in some more, in others less exact. In some few instances, perhaps, it may amount to a *real practical proof*; in others not so: yet in these, it is a *confirmation* of what is proved otherways.’† Admitting, what cannot indeed be denied, the competency of analogical reasoning to afford positive evidence; the points on which Butler has brought his analogy to bear, are so numerous and important, that his argument, if fairly estimated, must be considered as productive of a very high degree of positive evidence‡.

* § 178. † BUTLER'S *Analogy*. *Introduction*.

‡ ‘In some instances, the probability resulting from a concurrence of different analogies may rise so high, as to produce an effect on the belief scarcely distinguishable from moral certainty.’

STEWART.

Dr C. very properly refers to Newton as having carried the inductive method into practice with equal rigour and success: and he earnestly recommends the example of that great philosopher to those who would investigate the Christian Evidence. He could not indeed have chosen an happier example, for illustrating the applicability of the Inductive Philosophy properly understood, to the Christian Evidences both external and internal;—nor one which exhibits in a stronger point of view the utter fallacy of his own principles. Was it by ‘experience,’ or ‘direct and personal observation,’ that Newton became acquainted with that ‘invisible’ *cause* to which he referred the descent of bodies on this earth? He observed merely some of its *effects*; and by ascertaining and comparing these, he acquired the knowledge of certain laws by which its operations are conducted. Presuming on the acquaintance with the qualities of this unknown ‘power,’ which by observation of some of its effects he had acquired, he assumed it as the cause of the planetary motions—a cause wholly ‘inaccessible’ to him, and certainly not ‘coming within the ‘limits of direct and personal observation.’ Applying synthetically to the explication of

new phenomena, the principle he had thus obtained; he found it to account in all important points for their production and character, solving the difficulties and apparent contrarieties which had hitherto encompassed the subject. Founded, as the internal evidence of Christianity mainly is, upon observation of the common phenomena of the world, natural and moral;—if there is any part of Christian Evidence more strictly and extensively similar in principle than another to the Newtonian method,—it is that part. So remarkable indeed is that similarity,—that if Newton really rejected as fallacious the internal evidence of Christianity, with the conclusions of natural theology,—we should be tempted to pronounce such a rejection the most flagrant example of inconsistency, which a mind of high rank and cultivated powers ever exhibited. Newton was a firm believer in the truth of Christianity. Did he then really exhibit the inconsistency here supposed?—Did his conviction rest ‘exclusively’ on the external evidences?—Did he deem it unphilosophical to infer from observation of natural phenomena, the existence and intelligent character of the ‘Invisible’ Efficient Cause? Did he conceive the human intellect

unqualified for the perception of moral *ends* and *uses*, or incompetent to infer from such perceptions the moral qualities of the Efficient Cause?—Did he consider it as the chief end of philosophy, to ‘groupe phenomena,’ to ‘express resemblances in words, and announce them to the world in the form of general laws?’ Far otherwise. The great purpose of philosophy, he declares to be ‘not only to unfold the mechanism of the world, but *chiefly* to resolve these and such like questions: Whence is it that nature does nothing in vain, and whence arises all that order and beauty which we see in the world? —How came the bodies of animals to be contrived with so much art, and for what ends were their several parts?—Was the eye contrived without skill in optics, and the ear without knowledge of sounds?’ * Still it is

* ‘Hunc (Entem Intelligentem et Potentem) cognoscimus solummodo per proprietates suas et attributa, et per sapientissimas et optimas rerum structuras, et causas finales.’—‘Et hæc de Deo: de quo utique ex *phenomenis* disserere, ad philosophiam *experimentalem* pertinet.’ NEWT. *Princip.* We cannot conceive a more glaring rebellion against Lord Bacon’s maxims, than for the beings of a day to sit in judgment upon the Eternal, and to apply their paltry experience to the counsels of His high and unathomable wisdom.—‘In the process of time, the delusion multiplied and extended. Schools

possible that Newton's faith in Christianity *may* have rested solely on the external evidences, and that he may have deemed it presumption to investigate the 'subject of the message,' with a view to ascertain its truth.—By no means. Dr C. himself narrates * the proofs on which the conviction of this eminent person was founded; and after enumerating the chief external evidences, he informs us, that Newton '*saw the wisdom of God pervading the whole substance of the written message*, in such manifold adaptation to the circumstances of man, and to the whole secrecy of his thoughts, and his affections, and his spiritual wants, and his moral sensibilities, as, even in the mind of an ordinary and unlettered peasant, can be attested by human

were formed, and the way of the Divinity was as confidently theorized upon, as the processes of chemistry, and the economy of the heavens. Universities were endowed, and natural theology took its place in the circle of the sciences.' CHAL. *Evid.*—It seems somewhat capricious on the part of the author of these passages, to select Newton as the subject of unmingled approbation;—and to treat Des Cartes with unqualified reprehension, notwithstanding he pronounced the argument from final causes altogether futile: agreeing with Dr C. that it is presumption on the part of human reason, to attempt from observation of nature to penetrate into the counsels of heaven.

* Astronomical Discourses, II.

‘consciousness. *These formed the solid materials of the basis on which our experimental philosopher stood*’

Our author’s rejection of the argument from Final Causes, necessarily involves the negation of all theological conclusions, deducible from the brilliant physical discoveries of modern times. His imperfect acquaintance with the principles upon which Newton proceeded in his investigations, has led him into the strange inconsistency of at once maintaining the legitimacy of that process by which the Newtonian discoveries were atchieved, and denying that they furnish ground for any inferences regarding the nature and character of God or his administration.—‘All the philosophy which has been reared by the labour of successive ages, is the philosophy of facts reduced to general laws, or brought under a general description from observed points of resemblance. A proud and a wonderful fabric we do allow; but we throw away the very instrument by which it was built the moment that we cease to observe, and begin to *theorise* and to *excogitate*. Tell us a single discovery which has thrown a particle of light on the details of the divine administration. *Tell us a single truth in the whole*

‘ *field of experimental science, which can bring*
 ‘ *us to the moral government of the Almighty*
 ‘ *by any other road than his own revelation.*
 ‘ Astronomy has taken millions of suns and
 ‘ of systems within its ample domain ; but the
 ‘ ways of God to man stand at a distance as
 ‘ inaccessible as ever. Nor has it shed so
 ‘ much as a glimmering over the councils of
 ‘ that mighty and invisible Being, who sits in
 ‘ high authority over all worlds. *The boasted*
 ‘ *discoveries of modern science are all confined*
 ‘ *to that field, within which the sense of man*
 ‘ *can expatiate. The moment we go beyond*
 ‘ *this field they cease to be discoveries, and are*
 ‘ *the mere speculations of the fancy.*’ * ‘ We
 ‘ cannot conceive a transition more ardent and
 ‘ insurmountable, than to pass from the truths
 ‘ of natural science to a speculation on the
 ‘ details of God’s administration, or the eco-
 ‘ nomy of his moral government.’ † Whether
 our author meant that the reasonings he else-
 where employs should be looked upon as il-
 lustrative of the principles advanced in the
 work before us, we have no means of ascer-
 taining. It appears, however, that on another
 occasion he accepts the challenge which he
 throws out in the passage now quoted—enu-
 merates a variety of ‘ truths within the field

* § 195.

† § 177.

‘ of experimental science,’ which he holds up as ‘ bringing us to the moral government of God by another road than his own revelation,’—and uses expressions which can only be understood as affirming that ‘ the boasted discoveries of modern science are’ not ‘ confined to that field, within which the sense of man can expatiate.’* The reasonings of our

* ‘ Is it *presumption* to say, that the moral world extends to these distant and unknown regions? that they are occupied with people? that the charities of home, and of neighbourhood, flourish there? that the praises of God are there lifted up, and his goodness rejoiced in? that piety has its temples and its offerings? and the richness of the divine attributes is there felt and admired by intelligent worshippers?’—We can assert with the highest probability, that yon planetary orbs are so many worlds that they teem with life, and that the mighty Being who presides in high authority over this scene of grandeur and astonishment, has there planted the worshippers of his glory?’—‘ By the one, (the telescope,) I am told that the Almighty is now at work in regions more distant than geometry has ever measured, and among worlds more manifold than numbers have ever reached. But by the other, (the microscope,) I am also told, that, with a mind to comprehend the whole, in the vast compass of its generality, he has also a mind to concentrate a close and separate attention on each and on all of its particulars.’—‘ Now, that the microscope has unveiled the wonders of another region, I see strewed around me, with a profusion which baffles my every attempt to comprehend it, the *evidence* that there is no one portion of the universe of God too minute for his notice, nor too humble for the visitations of his care.’—‘ The way in which we have attempted to dispose of this plea is, by insisting on the *evidence* that *is every where* *

author now alluded to, (whatever opinion may be formed respecting the conclusiveness of many of them, or the admissibility of certain analogies which he asserts) are founded upon those principles, which in the work here subjected to examination he all along labours to overthrow: principles, which so far from being inconsistent, are in truth the very same, with those on which the Newtonian philosophy is reared.—‘Nothing,’ (says Mr Stewart) ‘could be more inconsistent with that irresistible disposition which prompts every philosophical enquirer to argue *from the known to the*

round us, of God combining with the largeness of a vast and mighty superintendence, which reaches the outskirts of creation, and spreads over all its amplitudes—the faculty of bestowing as much attention, and exercising as complete and manifold a wisdom, and lavishing as profuse and inexhaustible a goodness, on each of its humblest departments, as if it formed the whole extent of his territory.’—‘In all these greater arrangements of divine wisdom, we can see that God has done the same things for the accommodation of the planets, that he has done for the earth which we inhabit. And shall we say, *that the resemblance stops here*, because we are not in a situation to observe it?—that not a worshipper of the Divinity is to be found through the wide extent of your vast and immeasurable regions? It lends a delightful *confirmation to the argument*, when from *the growing perfection of our instruments*, we can discover a *new point of resemblance* between our earth and the other bodies of the planetary system,’ &c.

CHALMERS' *Astron. Disc.*

‘ *unknown*, than to suppose that while all the
 ‘ different bodies which compose the *material*
 ‘ universe are manifestly related to each other,
 ‘ as parts of a connected whole, the *moral*
 ‘ events which happen on our planet are quite
 ‘ insulated, and that the rational beings who
 ‘ inhabit it, and for whom we may reasonably
 ‘ presume it was brought into existence, have
 ‘ no relation whatever to other intelligent and
 ‘ moral natures. The presumption unques-
 ‘ tionably is, that there is *one great moral sys-*
 ‘ *tem*, corresponding to the *material system* ;
 ‘ and that the connections which we at pre-
 ‘ sent trace so distinctly among the sensible
 ‘ objects composing the one, are exhibited as
 ‘ *so many intimations* of some vast scheme,
 ‘ comprehending all the intelligent beings
 ‘ who compose the other. In this argument,
 ‘ as in numberless others which analogy sug-
 ‘ gests in favour of our future prospects, *the*
 ‘ *evidence is precisely of the same sort with that*
 ‘ *which first encouraged Newton to extend his*
 ‘ *physical speculations beyond the limits of the*
 ‘ *earth.** The sole difference is, that he had

* I cannot deny myself the pleasure of inserting here a pas-
 sage from a late controversial work of the celebrated Ram
 Mohun Roy, written in reply to one of his Brahminical anta-
 gonists who accuses him of ‘ denying the materiality of Deity

‘ an opportunity of verifying the results of his
 ‘ conjectures by an appeal to sensible facts :
 ‘ but this *accidental* circumstance, (although
 ‘ it certainly affords peculiar satisfaction and
 ‘ conviction to the astronomer’s mind) does
 ‘ not affect the grounds on which the conjec-
 ‘ ture was originally formed ; and only fur-
 ‘ nishes an experimental proof of *the justness*

‘ *because it is not evident to sense;*’ and by consequence of holding that ‘ Faith is confined to those objects *only* which ‘ are evident to sense.’ Ram Mohun answers:—‘ The asser- ‘ tion which I made use of in my former treatise is, that the na- ‘ ture of the Godhead is beyond the comprehension of external ‘ and internal senses ; which I presume implies neither denial ‘ of the materiality of God *on the sole ground of his being invis-*
 ‘ *ible*, nor the limitation of my faith merely to objects evident to ‘ the senses. For many things that far surpass the limits of our ‘ *senses to perceive, or experience to teach*, may yet be render- ‘ ed credible or even demonstrated by *inferences drawn from*
 ‘ *our experience. Such as the mutual gravitation of the earth*
 ‘ *and moon towards each other, and of both to the sun ; which*
 ‘ *facts cannot be perceived by any of our senses, but may be*
 ‘ *clearly demonstrated by reasoning drawn from our expe-*
 ‘ *rience.* Hence it appears that a thing is justly denied only ‘ when found *contrary to sense and reason*, and not merely be- ‘ cause it is *not perceptible to the senses.*’—A defence of Mo-
 notheism, containing sentiments so philosophical and so accu-
 rately expressed, *written and published at once in the Bengali*
and English languages by a Brahmin,—cannot but be hailed by
 every enlightened friend to Christianity, as the earnest of better
 things yet to come, than have hitherto accompanied the attempts
 to introduce the gospel into the East.

‘ of the principles on which it proceeded.’
 ‘ Between these two very different researches
 ‘ (into “ uses or advantages,” and into “ caus-
 ‘ es”) there is, both in physics and ethics, a
 ‘ very intimate connection. In various cases,
 ‘ the consideration of final causes has led to
 ‘ the discovery of some general laws of na-
 ‘ ture ;—and *in almost every case*, the disco-
 ‘ very of a general law clearly points out some
 ‘ *wise and beneficent purposes* to which it is
 ‘ subservient.’ *——‘ The study of philosophy,
 ‘ in all its various branches, both natural and
 ‘ moral, affords at every step a new illustration
 ‘ of the subject to which these investigations
 ‘ relate ; insomuch that the truths of natural
 ‘ religion gain an accession of evidence, from
 ‘ every addition that is made to the stock of
 ‘ human knowledge. Hence, in the case of
 ‘ those individuals who devote themselves,
 ‘ with fair and candid minds, to the pursuits of
 ‘ science, there is a gradual progress of light
 ‘ and conviction, keeping pace with the en-
 ‘ largement of their information and of their
 ‘ views ; and hence a strong presumption, that
 ‘ the influence which these truths have, even
 ‘ in the present state of society, will continu-
 ‘ ally increase in proportion as the order of
 ‘ the material universe shall be more fully

* STEWART'S *Elem.* Vol. II.

‘ displayed by the discoveries of philosophy,
‘ and as the plan of Providence in the admini-
‘ stration of human affairs, shall be more com-
‘ pletely unfolded in the future history of our
‘ species.’ *

* Outlines of Mor. Phil.

CHAP. IV.

EXAMINATION OF DR CHALMER'S REPRESENTATIONS OF THE NATURE OF THAT EVIDENCE, BY MEANS OF WHICH THE CONVERSION OF PAGAN NATIONS WAS EFFECTED IN THE FIRST AGES OF CHRISTIANITY.—THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE EMPLOYED BY THE AUTHOR OF CHRISTIANITY, AND HIS EARLY FOLLOWERS.

DR Chalmers represents the conversion of the Gentiles to the Christian faith as effected *exclusively* by the exhibition of the External Evidences. 'Let us go back,' he says, 'to the first Christians of the Gentile world. They turned from dumb idols to serve the living and true God. They made a simple and entire transition from a state as bad if not worse than that of entire ignorance, to the Christianity of the New Testament. Their previous conceptions, instead of helping

‘ them, behoved to be abandoned. They saw
 ‘ the miracles,—they acquiesced in them as
 ‘ satisfying credentials of an inspired teacher;
 ‘ they took the whole of their religion from
 ‘ his mouth;—their faith came by hearing,
 ‘ and hearing by the words of a divine mes-
 ‘ senger. This was their process, and it ought
 ‘ to be ours.’ *

The ground which our author here occupies, is altogether different from that which we have hitherto been employed in examining. The appeal here is to fact; not to principles of reason and philosophy. Supposing the fact ascertained which Dr C. has affirmed, disputants might still indeed divide upon the questions, whether the process by which Pagan nations reached conviction be the only admissible one?—and whether, supposing others admissible, that process be the best possible in all circumstances?—But still, if the fact be as he states it;—*if miracles unaided by previous conceptions, or by the character of the Revelation*, effected the conversion of the Gentiles;—then it must be admitted that this fact furnishes a much sounder foundation for several of Dr C.’s most important conclusions, than any of the other grounds on which he has rested them.

There happen, however, to be peculiar circumstances connected with this fact, which render it a matter of some difficulty to establish it in a clear and satisfactory manner. Dr C. has not cited any historical authority in its support.—In the absence of direct evidence, then,—it would seem necessary for the establishment of this point, to shew in the first place, that the ‘previous conceptions,’ entertained by the Gentiles, were actually as bad, if not worse than entire ignorance,—*all* previous conceptions, (it must be observed,) applicable to the subject from whatever sources derived—not merely those which were drawn from the established systems of superstition.—Some circumstances will be mentioned in the sequel, which render the probation of this point, a matter by no means easy.—Meantime we may advert to certain facts, connected with the promulgation of Christianity, which lead to the supposition, that ‘previous conceptions,’ however unnecessary and useless according to Dr C.’s system, had actually some share in ushering Christianity into general reception.

One great object, if not the main design, of that peculiar system of polity, under which the Hebrews were disciplined, undeniably was,

—to establish rational sentiments of religion, first among that people, and afterwards, by their means, among other nations. This whole economy seems constructed on the principle, that *previous rational conceptions of religion tend to prepare the way for Christianity.** The foundation of this religion was laid in Judea, —where, by the institution of a system of strict retributive government, supernaturally sustained for ages, the existence of an Immaterial Deity of all moral perfection, the witness and the judge of human beings, had been rendered an article of popular belief. No sooner had this supernatural system, under which they were disciplined, produced its proper effect, than Jewish families were sent into all quarters of the world, carrying with them their creed, their worship, and their sacred books, now translated into the common language of the literary world. The spirit of philosophical investigation, availing itself of materials found in the remains of Patriarchism, and in the Jewish system, had in the more enlightened communities of the earth, brought into question every principle of the established faith: the human mind laboured less un-

* A principle which pervades Dr C.'s system is, that Atheism is the proper introduction to Christianity.

der the deadening weight of superstition, and had begun to recover its elasticity:—and freer, and less irrational conceptions in regard to the principles of religion, began to prevail. From Judea, Christianity accordingly made its way into those Gentile cities and communities farthest advanced in civilization:—into Corinth, Ephesus, and Athens, Thessalonica, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome. The philosophers, who were generally suspected of entertaining Atheistical principles, did not indeed become converts to Christianity; but among the people, who were generally well informed, Christianity struck root.—It does not appear that at its promulgation, its greatest success was among those who were least furnished with antecedent conceptions of the existence and true character of the Deity.

But leaving this point:—In order to establish the fact, that miracles unaided by ‘previous conceptions,’ or by the character of the revelation, effected the conversion of the Gentiles—it would be necessary, in the circumstances of the case, to lead a proof, either that the evidence arising out of the character of the revelation, *i. e.* the internal evidence, was not exhibited to the Gentiles; or that its exhibition was absolutely nugatory. Upon

the supposition that the internal evidence was actually offered in conjunction with the external; it must necessarily be a point of great difficulty, to establish the entire inefficacy of the former. Historical evidence in proof of this point also, we may safely affirm to be altogether wanting. The effect of the different kinds of Christian evidence, we know to be estimated in our times very variously by different minds. While some lean mainly on the evidence of miracles of power,—while on them no other sort of evidence perhaps would have made sufficient impression;—others assign much more weight to those of knowledge. Some lay great stress on the direct testimony of the first publishers, viewed in conjunction with their characters;—and other minds are so constituted that to them no evidence seems so irresistible, [as that which arises from the consonancy of the Christian doctrine with the principles and feelings of our rational and moral nature; and the admirable adaptation of the whole system to the wants and fears and hopes of humanity. Unlike those babes in Christ, who are startled at every frivolous objection with which infidels assail the character of Christianity, they consider the supposition as beyond measure incredible, that

so pure, harmonious, and appropriate a system, —so worthy of God to give, so important for man to receive, should have owed its origin to men such as the first promulgators of the Christian religion were, if really uninspired.— Supposing the various evidences to have been exhibited in conjunction, it will be difficult to prove that the same variety of feeling, in regard to the relative effect and conclusiveness of the different species, did not prevail among the converts to whom the author alludes. The probability is, that the impressions at first made, would in many cases be of an indefinite nature ; difficult to be analysed or referred to their proper causes :—and that time and a course of instruction would be requisite, for establishing faith on a stable and definite basis.

As there seems no method, then, of establishing the conclusion, that the internal evidence, supposing it exhibited to the Gentiles, had no share whatever in effecting their conversion ;—it becomes requisite in order to prove that this great work was effected by means of external evidence exclusively, to shew that the internal evidence was not exhibited. The probation of this point, indeed, is not merely required for the establishment

of that particular fact which Dr C. has asserted,—but is indispensably necessary to the support of his whole scheme of evidence.—The conclusions which reason, unaided by revelation, draws, regarding the existence, character, and administration of God,—from whatsoever source these conclusions may be derived, are, according to his system, absolute fallacies. As we are completely unqualified, therefore, for forming any judgment respecting the character of the revelation offered, every sort of evidence founded upon that character is equally nugatory. It is false philosophy to apply the ‘paltry experience’ of man, to the ‘counsels’ of the Most High;—it is ‘presumption’ on the part of ‘theologians’ to ‘talk of the reason of the thing;’—the authority of every revelation rests ‘*exclusively* upon the external evidence.’—To suppose then, that the publishers of Christianity would employ fallacious evidence;—that they would represent the false and presumptuous conclusions of natural theology as trustworthy,—that men under the influence of the Spirit of Truth could act in this manner,—is not only self-contradictory but impious. If, then, instead of its being proved that they never did employ the internal evidence,—it should on the contrary be shewn that they did

on many occasions exhibit it, representing the conclusions of reason on which it rests as admissible and valid,—all other evidence of the fallacy of those principles on which our Author's theory is built, cannot but be deemed altogether superfluous by Christians.

Of the many distinguished persons employed in the conversion of the heathen world, no one certainly is entitled to higher consideration and authority, than the great Apostle of the Gentiles. If we can by any means ascertain with certainty what his sentiments were, respecting the validity of theological conclusions founded on observation of the phenomena of nature, and in regard to the authority due to the moral perceptions of the human mind,—we may consider the point as in great measure determined. Now it happens that his sentiments upon these important subjects are distinctly recorded. ‘That which may be known of God is manifest among them,’ (among Pagans as well as others,) ‘for God hath manifested it to them. For His *invisible* things, even his eternal power and Godhead, since the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being *understood by the things that are made.*’ *—‘God left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and

* Rom. i. 19.

‘ gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.’ *—‘ When the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these persons having not the law, are a law unto themselves: who shew *the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness*, and also their reasonings between one another, when they accuse or else excuse each other.’ †—Nothing can be more decided and unequivocal, than the opinion here expressed, of the authority due to the native moral perceptions of the human mind, and of the validity of the argument from Final Causes. Nay the reasoning of the Apostle, grounded on principles which he here lays down, is intended to shew that men are altogether inexcuseable who do not yield themselves to the guidance of those intimations of moral truth which the constitution of their minds affords; and who do not from ‘ experience ’ and ‘ observation ’ of effects, infer the existence, character, and government of an ‘ Invisible Intelligent Cause.’ ‡

* Acts xiv. 17.

† Rom. ii. 15.

‡ ‘ There is perhaps nothing more thoroughly beyond the cognizance of the human faculties than the truths of religion, and the ways of that mighty and invisible Being who is the object of it.’—CHALMERS.

We are prepared therefore to expect, that this Apostle, in exhibiting to Gentiles the evidences of Christianity, would not restrict himself to those which Dr C. considers as exclusively competent, but would avail himself also of those theological and moral conclusions which in his own opinion are trustworthy; but which have been exalted by ‘delusion’ (according to the modern divine) to the ‘circle of the sciences.’*—We are prepared to expect that the exhibition of those miraculous powers with which he was gifted, high and important as those powers were to the full success of his mission, would not be the only evidence he would employ for establishing the truth of his doctrine. We are prepared to expect, that having enunciated his doctrine, he would not uniformly refer to his own testimony corroborated by a miracle, as the sole criterion of its truth, declining any discussion of its reasonableness;—but that he would recommend it to the faith of his hearers, by the exercise of that ‘gift of wisdom’ with which he was eminently endowed, and which has been well defined—‘the talent of arguing from the natural principles of reason, for the conversion of philosophical infidels.’ †

* § 191.

† Horsley.

Accordingly, when called upon by the Athenians, to declare to them that ‘new doctrine’ which it was his office to publish,—we find that Paul resorts to the exercise of that talent as the means of recommending his religion to their reception. He begins his discourse with a plain exposition of some fundamental points of Christianity—by which its vast superiority over the established superstition, is rendered apparent to reason. After declaring in sublime yet simple language, the existence, creative power, and universal providence of the Deity—after adverting to the duty incumbent upon all men,* to use those means which nature affords, of searching into these high religious truths—Paul proceeds to enforce conviction of these truths, by the use of that powerful ‘natural argument of the schools,’ which is drawn from the constitution of man. Availing him-

* The sentiments of the Apostle are thus expressed in the language of modern philosophy. ‘To employ our faculties in studying those evidences of power, of wisdom, and of goodness, which He has displayed in his works; as it is the foundation in other instances of our sense of religious obligation, so it is in itself a duty incumbent on us as reasonable and moral beings, capable of recognizing the existence of an Almighty Cause, and of feeling corresponding sentiments of devotion.’—STEWART’S *Outlines of Mor. Phil.*

self of a well-grounded previous conception, which chanced to be prevalent, (and which certainly did not, in his opinion, require 'to be abandoned'*) and citing the words in which that conception was expressed by one of their poets—he assumes it as the basis of an argument, which concludes in exposing the extreme absurdity of believing that a being such as man, should be the offspring of inanimate matter. 'In him we live and move and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art or man's device.' †

* 'Their previous conceptions, instead of helping them, beloved to be abandoned.'—CHALMERS.

† Acts xvii. 29.

A learned Scripture-critic has hazarded the conjecture, that this admirable address of Paul to the Athenians, was intended as an experiment, to ascertain how far the internal evidence employed alone might be effectual for producing conviction: and he has represented the supposed experiment as having failed; St Paul's attempts to introduce the Gospel into Athens, having proved, (as he conceives) almost entirely unsuccessful.—'It is not said that Paul wrought any miracles at Athens: and the little success with which he preached, gives reason to suspect that he wrought no miracles there. Perhaps in this he acted by divine direction, to try what reception the Gospel would meet with from learned and inquisi-

At the commencement of that close and powerful train of reasoning, which the same Apostle addresses to his Roman converts, he proposes to establish the doctrine of ‘justifi-

‘tive men, when offered to them merely upon the footing of
 ‘its own reasonableness. The truth is, if such an experiment
 ‘was any where to be made, in order to confute those in after
 ‘times, who should affirm that the general reception of the
 ‘Gospel in the first ages, was owing not to miracles, but to the
 ‘absurdities of Heathenism, and to the reasonableness of
 ‘the Gospel-doctrine, Athens surely was the place where the
 ‘trial could be made with most advantage, and Paul’s oration
 ‘in the Areopagus was the discourse which should have con-
 ‘vinced reasonable men. Nevertheless at Athens, where the
 ‘human faculties were carried to the greatest perfection, the
 ‘Apostle was not able to convince his hearers of the folly of
 ‘idolatry, nor of the reasonableness of worshipping the only
 ‘living and true God, by purity of mind and holiness of life. And
 ‘therefore, the Gospel which taught these sublime truths, was
 ‘rejected by the philosophers as unfit for the common people,
 ‘and they remained as much attached to their errors as before.—
 ‘After having so unsuccessfully preached to the philosophers and
 ‘others in Athens, the Apostle judged it needless any longer to
 ‘attempt, by natural means, the conversion of such a vain, un-
 ‘principled, frivolous people. And being allowed to use no other
 ‘means, he left them as incorrigible, and went forward to Co-
 ‘rinth, now become more considerable for the number, the learn-
 ‘ing, and the wealth of its inhabitants, than even Athens itself.’
 (Dr M’Knight.) If Paul, during his abode in Athens, confined
 himself strictly to the use of the internal evidence, there is here a
 case,—to which it cannot be shewn that there is any parallel,—of
 an inspired teacher of Christianity attempting to establish a Church
 in a Pagan City by means of one species of evidence detached

‘ cation by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.’—And what are the evidences he employs for producing conviction of the truth of this funda-

from the others. That the Apostles were in the habit of employing the external and internal evidences in conjunction, their writings fully prove. And there is no sufficient reason for supposing that, during his residence at Athens, Paul deviated from his usual mode of procedure.—The Evangelist does not indeed inform us that *miracles* were performed by the Apostle in that city but the silence of the historian cannot be considered as by any means decisive of the point. Luke does not state that the Apostle performed any at Corinth, although it appears from the writings of Paul that miracles were wrought there. But whatever may be in this, there seems scarce any room for doubt that another species of external evidence was appealed to by the Apostle at Athens. We are told that upon his arrival, he went, according to his uniform custom, into the Jewish Synagogue, where ‘ he disputed with the Jews and devout persons.’ The arguments from *prophecy* usually formed the subject of his disputations on these occasions. ‘ These were the topics,’ according to Dr M. K. ‘ on which Paul insisted in *all* his sermons to ‘ the Jews and proselytes.’ The ‘ experiment’ attributed to the Apostle, does not seem then to have been completely or fairly tried. And if the Jews and proselytes at Athens, like those at Corinth and other cities, ‘ opposed themselves and ‘ blasphemed,’ (of which by the way we are not expressly informed,) it follows that this species of external evidence, no less than the internal, failed at Athens.

But whence did Dr M. K. derive his information, that Paul was so very unsuccessful in his attempts to plant Christianity at Athens?—There is nothing in the Scripture account of the

mental and peculiar doctrine of Christianity? Does he appeal directly and solely to the high authority on which it stands? On this occasion the evidence which he employs is of a different nature. Viewing this doctrine in connection with that of the general corruption of mankind, and their consequent liability to punishment, under the administration of a just and holy God,—he occupies

transaction, indicating absolute failure. On the contrary, it appears that he not only converted Dionysius, Damaris, and 'others with them,'—but that besides these, 'others' were in a certain degree impressed by his eloquent display of the internal evidence, 'saying, we will hear thee again of this matter.'—Nor does it appear from subsequent history, that the seed thus sown by the Apostle. proved unfruitful. Eusebius mentions Dionysius, Paul's convert. as first bishop of Athens,—which ascertains the existence of a church there, (for the advantageous practice of ordaining bishops where there were no churches, is certainly not quite so ancient as the times of which we speak.) And although the authority of Nicephorus is not of much account, no improbability attaches to his assertion, that Dionysius was ordained by Paul himself to that office. We have undoubted authority for stating that the Athenian church was re-united by Quadratus after the persecution in which Publius, Dionysius's successor, suffered:—which seems to imply, that it had previous to the persecution been in a prosperous state;—a state which it very soon regained, for among the Christian churches, whose exemplary conduct Origen contrasts with the depravity of heathen communities, that of Athens is the first named.—*Euseb. Hist. Eccl. Lib. III. cap. 4.*—*Niceph. His. Ec. Lib. II c. 20.*—*Dion. Cor. Ep. ad Athen. ap. Euseb. Lib. IV. c. 22.*—*Orig. con. Cels. Lib. III.*

the first two chapters of his Epistle in establishing these previous doctrines, by *reference to facts*, and by *appeals to the principles of reason and conscience*. In particular he overthrows the favourite plea of the Jews—their possession of the law and its privileges,—by a direct and powerful appeal to the *natural sentiments of the human mind*, regarding that correspondence which ought always to subsist between a man's actions and his professions; and to that *moral judgment of the mind*, by which the utter worthlessness of the latter, when contradicted by the former, is rendered evident.—Having thus 'concluded,' that *all* are guilty before God,—not by an appeal to external evidence,—but by an argumentative discussion of the *reasonableness* of his conclusion,—he then goes on to establish his main doctrine by a similar mode of proof, shewing its *consistency with what he had already established*;—the *consonancy of the mediatorial scheme, with the known wisdom and mercy of God*;—and its *entire adaptation to all the circumstances of man's forlorn condition*, which admitted of no other remedy.—After reading a single chapter of this Epistle, it is impossible to recal, without amazement, the declaration of Dr C.—'Reason is not entitled

‘ to sit in judgment over these internal evidences, which many a presumptuous theologian has attempted to derive from the reason of the thing.’*

On another occasion, this Apostle makes the following appeal:—‘ I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say.’ †—He is here shewing the inexpediency and danger of associating with heathens in their festivals;—and is labouring to put a stop to this dishonourable and pernicious practice on the part of his Corinthian converts. Does he ground his directions on this point ‘ exclusively’ upon the authority of God evidenced by miracles, and his own testimony?—Dr C. alludes to the ‘ severe reckonings which St Paul had with some of his Churches,’—and to his being at times ‘ called upon to school their doubts and their suspicions.’ The occasion on which the words quoted above were spoken, was one of this kind. Does the Apostle, on this occasion, use language similar to that which Dr C. employs for schooling the doubts and suspicions of modern converts? ‘ A message has come to us bearing on its forehead every character of authenticity; and is it right now that every question of our

* § 192.

† 1 Cor. x. 15.

‘ faith, or of our duty, should be committed to
 ‘ the capricious variations of this man’s taste
 ‘ or of that man’s fancy? Our maxim—our
 ‘ sentiment!—God has put an authoritative
 ‘ stop to all this. He has spoken, and the
 ‘ right or the liberty of speculation no longer
 ‘ remains to us.’* The language which the
 Apostle here employs, and the mode which
 he adopts, of checking the practice which had
 been brought under his observation, are very
 different from those which alone are sanction-
 ed by Dr C.’s principles. The Apostle repre-
 sents to his converts the unreasonableness of
 this practice;—the danger of their being
 drawn into idolatry by it;—and the natural
 incompatibility between that pure service
 which God requires, and those impure rites
 which accompanied the worship of heathen
 divinities. He represents to them the mani-
 fest hazard to weak consciences, from such a
 practice;—and he takes occasion in the course

* § 186.—I am far from insinuating that this mode of dealing
 ‘ with doubts and suspicions and speculations,’ is not on certain
 occasions justifiable and proper.—But the question is, Is this
 the *only* admissible mode—or, may not in other cases an ap-
 peal be properly made, in support of Christian doctrines and
 precepts, to the natural principles of reason and morals?—On
 Dr C.’s principles there never can. According to the Apostle
 Paul’s practice there may.

of the argument to point out the important distinction which subsists, between things lawful and things expedient. In the same strain he reasons at considerable length upon the subject: and all this reasoning, it may be observed, for the justice and conclusiveness of which he appeals to their judgment, as reasonable and conscientious men, ('I speak as 'to wise men, judge ye what I say,') is employed for convincing them of the impropriety of a practice, which there can be no doubt of his having had authority to prohibit at once:—for he alludes to it as 'provoking the Lord to jealousy.'

It would be endless to discuss at length all the reasonings, resolvable into principles altogether unphilosophical and fallacious according to Dr C.'s views,—which the great apostle of the Gentiles employs, for producing conviction in their minds of the truths of Christianity. The subjects of his 'reasonings' might be mentioned, when sent for by Felix, that he might 'hear him concerning the 'faith in Christ,'*—reasonings which produced a very sensible impression upon his heathen auditor. The admirable argument

* Acts xxiv. 25.

might also be referred to, by which he supports the doctrine of the resurrection.*—

* I. Cor. xv. 35.

Dr C. alluding to this argument as used by Clemens Romanus, styles it an ‘illustration.’ Admitting this—it is an illustration drawn from phenomena, declared to be produced by the power of God. How then should one part of the Divine procedure, which is unknown or ‘invisible,’ be illustrated by another which bears no *true analogy* to it, and from which we are not entitled to draw *any* conclusion?—But although it may suit Dr C.’s views to denominate this an ‘illustration,’ it is in reality an *argument* in the proper sense of the term, and of the soundest and most conclusive nature. The Apostle manifestly has it in view to confute those who denied the *possibility* of the resurrection; and the object of his fellow-labourer Clemens is obviously the same, as appears from the expression he uses on concluding his argument, ‘Nothing is *impossible* with ‘God,’ &c. Nothing could more effectually accomplish the purpose in view, than to exhibit an example of an equal degree of power exerted in a similar manner.—Such analogical reasonings derive their great force and beauty from that important principle now recognised by philosophy;—a principle suggested by observation of nature, but fully confirmed only by revelation;—that there is a certain unity of character, which marks the procedure of divine Providence, extending itself throughout the whole moral and material universe, and pervading both the present and the future world. ‘There is a certain character, or *style*, (if I may use the expression) in the operations of divine wisdom,—something which every where announces amidst an infinite variety of detail, an inimitable unity and harmony of design; and in the perception of which, philosophical sagacity and genius seem chiefly to consist.’ ‘Nor is it only in the material and moral worlds, when considered as separate and independent systems, that this unity of design is perceptible. They mutually

We might enlarge on the various reasonings he employs for exhibiting the superiority in point of excellence, of the Christian system over the heathen superstitions and philosophical systems, as well as over the Jewish law*. By plainly displaying in the view of reason and of conscience, the sublimity, native truth, and excellence of the religion he taught, he conceived that he adduced irresistible evidence in support of his assertion, that it is ‘the power of God and the wisdom of God.†’

We shall not wonder that this Apostle was so much in the habit of drawing evidence from sources, denounced by Dr C. as inadequate and injurious ‡, when we attend to the nature of the proofs, on many occasions adduced in support of the doctrines he taught, by Him whose word was with power, and who spake as never man spake.—Were all the

‘bear to each other numberless relations, which are more particularly remarkable, when we consider both in their combined tendencies with respect to human happiness and improvement.’
 STEWART’S *Elements*, Vol. II.

* 1 Cor. 1.—Ep. to Hebrews.

† See this subject excellently illustrated in Gerard’s ‘*Dissertations on the Genius and Evidences of Christianity.*’

‡ ‘They will not only lead you to misconceive that economy, but to maintain a *stubborn opposition* to the only competent evidence that can be offered on the subject.’—CHALMERS, § 149.

cases to be enumerated, in which our Lord refers to evidence of this description, a large part of what is recorded of his preaching must be transcribed. We have several striking examples, in his conversation with Nicodemus, one in particular, in that passage where, endeavouring to impress upon his hearer conviction of the nature and necessity of regeneration, he refers him to the nature of things as furnishing a sufficient confutation of the erroneous notion he seemed to entertain upon the subject. The new birth, he argues, must be a spiritual one: a second natural birth, were it possible, is obviously unfit for answering the purpose. ‘That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit.’* This renovation being effected by the action of one immaterial being upon another, cannot be the subject of any difficulty grounded on the nature or qualities of material substance. The process is completely imperceptible, unless by its effects. ‘Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born

* John iii. 6,

‘ of the Spirit.’ In this manner our Lord recommends the doctrine under consideration, to the reception of one who acknowledged himself convinced by miracles that Jesus was commissioned of God. This does not seem to imply an opinion, that the ‘ purity of the ‘ Christian profession is tainted’ by those ‘ who ‘ in addition to the word of God, talk also of ‘ the reason of the thing ;’ ‘ appealing’ thus ‘ to principles of which’ he, Dr C. ‘ under- ‘ takes to make out the incompetency.’*

On one occasion, after having performed a miracle, which the bigotted prejudices of the spectators led them to attribute to demoniacal agency†—our Saviour condescends to argue with them from principles of reason, on the justness of their conclusion: Shewing the

* § 184. Dr C. does not indeed explicitly affirm the incompetency of these evidences, *as addressed to a Jew*. The Jews were specially commanded to pay regard to the nature of the doctrine, in admitting the claims of a Teacher who appealed to external evidence in proof of the truth of what he taught. Deut. xiii. 1.

† This belief in demoniacal agency, and in the reality of magic—a belief which was universally prevalent in the Heathen world, induced the early apologists of Christianity to lay much less stress in their writings, on the argument from miracles of power, than on that from prophecy, and the other evidences.

extreme absurdity of supposing that such a-gency should be thus exerted for the destruc-tion of its own influence.* On a multitude of occasions, his mode of arguing is precisely that of the moralist, grounded on phenomena of nature and of providence. Examples might be given in his reasoning on the subjects of divorce, polygamy, the Sabbath, &c.—How admirably does he give force to that impor-tant doctrine which regards God as the wil-ling hearer of prayer, by the appeal he makes to the natural principle of parental affection. ‘What man is there of you, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone,—if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?—If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good gifts unto them that ask him?’—In support of another very important doctrine of the gospel, the par-ticular superintendence of Providence,—our Saviour draws a very strong analogical proof from natural religion. ‘Behold the fowls of the air,—they sow not, neither do they reap; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them—are not ye much better than they? —Consider the lilies of the field how they grow: If God so clothe the grass of the

* Matt. xii. 22.

‘ field, how much more shall he clothe you, ‘ O ye of little faith ?’—Dr C. entertains no small degree of contempt for those, who ‘ repose,’ as he expresses it, ‘ a very strong ‘ confidence in natural religion, and think ‘ that upon the mere strength of its evidence, ‘ they can often pronounce with a considera- ‘ ble degree of assurance on the character of ‘ the divine administration.’ * Our Saviour in this passage reprehends those, who, upon the mere strength of evidence derived from natural religion, did *not* pronounce with a considerable degree of assurance upon the character of the divine administration.—One example more shall only be added, of the kind of evidence which our Lord at times employed, for producing conviction of the truth of his religion. Adverting to the surprise expressed on one occasion by his auditors, in consequence of the knowledge and wisdom which his discourses displayed, he thus appeals to *the character and tendency of his doctrine*, in proof of the divinity of its origin. ‘ My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent ‘ me : if any man will do his will, he shall ‘ know of the doctrine whether it be of God, ‘ or whether I speak of myself : he that speak-

* § 173.

‘eth of himself, seeketh his own glory ; but
‘he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the
‘same is true, and no unrighteousness is in
‘him.’

Imitating the example afforded them by the Author of Christianity, and his inspired Apostles, their early followers assiduously employed the internal evidence, as one of the most powerful weapons of that warfare which they were called to wage. In urging upon heathens the claims of the gospel to their acceptance, the early advocates of our faith contrast its doctrines and precepts with the established systems of superstition ; they call upon their hearers to judge between these opposite systems, from the internal character of each ; appealing to their understandings and consciences for the truth of Christianity. Many of their writings, which have been preserved, are full of such appeals, urged at times in a manner so powerful and impressive, as to bring immediately to recollection the similar addresses of their inspired predecessors. Conceiving it competent for human reason to form general conclusions respecting the nature and character of Deity, sufficiently trust-worthy to destroy the credibility of every

system, the doctrines of which contradict these conclusions; they exhibit Polytheism as full of such doctrines, and call upon its votaries to reject it upon that ground.*

* “Τὰ δὲ σοιχεῖα ἔ τὰ μόρια αὐτῶν θεοποιεσιν, ἄλλοτε ἄλλα ὀνοματα αὐτοῖς τίθειμενοι· τὴν μὲν τῷ σίτῃ σποράν, Οσίριν, &c. Ὡς δὲ ἰδὲν πλεὺν νεῆς, κἂν ἢ πᾶσιν ἠσκημῖνη, μὴ ἐχέσης τὸν κυβερνήτην ἔδὲ τῶν σοιχεῖων ὄφελ' διακεικοσμένων. δίχα τῆς παρὰ τε Θεῖς προνοίας· ἦτε γὰρ ναῦς καθ' ἑαυτὴν ἔ πλοῦσεται, τὰ δὲ σοιχεῖα χωρὶς τε δημιούργῃς ἔ κινήσεται.” Athenag. Apol.

Ἡκούων ἔν αὐθίς, ἔ γὰρ ἀρήσω καλῶν, εἰ μικροτέχναι, ἔδεις πῶ τέτων ἔμπιεν εἰκόνα διδημιούργηκεν, ἔδὲ μὴν ἐκ γῆς μαλθακὴν ἐμάλαξι σάρκα. Τίς ἔτιξῃ μυελόν; ἢ τίς ἔπηξεν ὄσέα; τίς νεῦρα δίστεινεν; τίς φλίβας ἐφύσησεν; τίς αἷμα ἐνέχεεν ἐν αὐταῖς; ἢ τίς δερμα περιέτεινεν; πῶ δ' ἂν τις αὐτῶν ὄφθαλμοὺς ποίησαι βλέποντας; τίς ἐνεφύσησε ψυχὴν; τίς δικαιοσύνην ἐδωρήσατο; τίς ἀθανασίαν ὑπερέχεται; Μόν' ὁ τῶν ὄλων δημιούργης, ὁ ἀριστέτεχνος πατὴρ τοῖστων ἔγαλμα ἔμφυχον ἡμᾶς· τὸν ἀνθρώπῃν ἔπλασεν· ὁ δὲ Ολύμπι' ὕμων, ἠκόνος Ἐικῶν, πολὺ τι τῆς ἀληθείας ἀπαδῶν, ἔργον ἔστι κωφῶν χειρῶν ἀττικῶν. Ἡ μὲν γὰρ τε Θεῖς εἰκῶν, ὁ Λογ' αὐτῆ· καὶ υἱὸς τῷ θεῷ γνησίος ὁ θεὸς λόγος, φωτὸς ἀρχετυπῶν φῶς· εἰκῶν δὲ τῷ Λόγῳ, ὁ ἀνθρώπος. Αληθινὸς ὁ νῦς ὁ ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ, ὁ κατ' εἰκόνα τῷ Θεῷ, ἔ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν διὰ τετῶ γεγενῆσθαι λεγόμεν', τῇ κατα καρδίαν φρονήσει τῷ θεῷ παραεικαζόμενος Λόγῳ, ἔ ταυτὴ λογικὸς. Ανθρώπος δὲ τῷ ὀρωμῖνός, τε γηγενῆς, γήϊνος εἰκῶν τὰ ἀγάλματα τα ἀνδρεκέελα, πόρρω τῆς ἀληθείας ἐπίκαιρον ἐκμαγεῖον καταφαίνονται. Clem. Alex.

“Ὅρα δὲ εἰ μὴ τὰ τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν, ταῖς κοιναῖς ἐννοιαῖς ἀρχῆθεν συναγορεύοντα, μετατίθησι τὰς εὐγνωμοῦς ἀπέοντας τῶν λεγομένων· εἰ γὰρ ἔ ἢ διασφ' ἢ διδύνηται, πολλῆς αὐτῇ κατηχῆσεως συναγορευόμενης, τοῖς πολλοῖς ἐμφυτεῦσαι τὸν περὶ ἀγαλμάτων λόγον ὡς Θεῶν, ἔ τὸ περὶ τῶν γινομένων, ἐκ χρυσῆ, καὶ ἀργύρου, ἔ ἐλεφάντος καὶ λίθου ὡς προσκυνήσεως ἀξίων· ἀλλ' ἢ κοινὴ ἐννοια ἀπαιτεῖ ἐννοεῖν, ὅτι Θεὸς ἔδαμῶς ἐστὶν ὕλη φθαρτὴ, ἔδὲ τιμᾶται ἐν ἀψύχοις ὕλαις ἐπο ἀνθρώπων

Entertaining no doubt respecting the universality and immutability of moral distinctions perceived by conscience, they appeal to * the moral perceptions of the human mind, as af-

μορφόμενος, ὡς κατ' εἰκόνα ἢ τινα σύμβολα ἐκείνῃ γιγνομέναις. Δί-
περ εὐθείως λέγεται τὰ περὶ τῶν τοίετων δημιουργημάτων, ὅτι ἔκ εἰς
συγκριτὰ πρὸς τὸν δημιουργὸν ὀλίγα τε περὶ τῆ ἐπὶ πᾶσι Θεῷ δημι-
ουργήσαντος, καὶ συνεχόντος ἔ κυβερνῶντος τα ὅλα ἔ εὐθείως περὶ τὸ
συγγενὲς ἐπιγνῶσα ἢ λογικῇ ψυχῇ, ἀπορρίπτει μὲν ἂ τινὲς ἰδοῦσαζεν εἶ-
ναι Θεὸς, φίλτρον δ' ἀναλαμβάνει φυσικὸν τὸ πρὸς τὸν κτίσαντα· ἔ διὰ
τὸ πρὸς ἐκείνον φίλτρον, ὑπεραποδέχεται ἔ τὸν ταῦτα πρῶτον πᾶσι
τοῖς ἔνεσι παραστήσαντα δι' ὧν κατισκεύασε μαθητῶν ἔς ἐξέπεμψε
μετα θείας δυνάμεως ἔ ἐξουσίας κηρύττει τὸν περὶ τῶ Θεῷ ἔ τῆς βα-
σιλείας αὐτῆ λόγον." Origen. con. Cels.

Vultis et ex operibus ipsius tot ac talibus quibus contine-
mur, quibus sustinemur, quibus oblectamur, etiam quibus exter-
remur: vultis ex ipsius animæ testimonio, comprobemus? Quæ
licet carcere corporis pressa licet institutionibus pravis circum-
scripta, licet libidinibus ac concupiscentiis evigorata, licet falsis
Diis exancillata, cum tamen respiscit ut ex crapula, ut ex somno,
ut ex aliqua valetudine et sanitatem suam patitur, deum no-
minat hoc solo quia proprie verus hic unus Deus, bonus et mag-
nus. * * O Testimonium animæ naturaliter Christianæ. TER-
TULLIAN.

* " Τίς γὰρ ἔκ ἄδει Κρόνον τεκνοφάγον. Δία δὲ τὸν παῖδα αὐτῆ
τὴν Μῆτιν καταπίνει; ἔ δειπνῶν μισρὰ τοῖς θεοῖς ἐτοιμάζει. * *
Τί μοι λοιπὸν καταλέγειν τὰ περὶ Ποσειδῶνος, ἔ Ἀπόλλωνος, ἢ Διο-
νύσε, ἔ Ἡρακλείου * * * Ὡς τῆς διανοίας τῶν ἔτιος ἀκριβῶς φιλο-
σοφησάντων ἔ φιλοσοφίαν ἐπαγγελλομένων * * * Ἡμεῖς δὲ ἔ θεὸν
ὁμολογῶμεν, ἀλλ' ἔνα τὸν κτίστην, καὶ ποιητὴν, ἔ δημιουργὸν τῶς τῶ
παντὸς κόσμου, καὶ προνοία τὰ πάντα διοικῆσθαι ἐπιστάμεθα· ἀλλ'
ἔπ' αὐτῆ μόνη ἔ νομον ἄγιον μιμαθηκαμεν· ἀλλὰ νομοτίτην ἔχομεν
τὸν ὄντως θεὸν ὃς καὶ διδάσκει ἡμᾶς, δικαιοπραγεῖν, ἔ εὐσεβεῖν καὶ κα-
λοποιεῖν. Theoph. Antioch.

fording clear and determinate data, from which the moral character of the Deity may be deduced; and upon these data they rear up arguments subversive of Polytheism, and corroborative of Christian Truth. They repel attempts, to level the miracles of the Gospel with the prodigies then current in the pagan world, by referring to the dignity and importance of the end for which the Christian miracles were wrought. * They display the rea-

Clem. Alex. adversus Gentes—passim. The arguments so frequently employed by the early Apologists drawn from the immoral character of the objects of heathen worship, are obviously inconclusive, unless the immutability of moral distinctions is acknowledged. If we have no reason to form any conceptions regarding the moral character of Deity, the flagitious characters of the Heathen divinities could form no reason for denying their existence or influence.—They do not however explicitly refer to this principle as the foundation of their argument; nor was this necessary, as it was virtually acknowledged by their opponents, who sometimes brought forward objections against Christianity, which had no other foundation.

* Μέσση τοίνυν σαύτην εήσας των τε περι τῶ Ἀριεῖς γιομένων, ἔ των περι τῷ Ἰησοῦ ἰσορρομμένων, ἴδε εἰ μὴ ἐκ τῶ ἀποθάντος, ἔ των ὠφελωμένων εἰς ἡτῶν ἐπανόρθωσιν, και εὐλάβειαν τὴν προς τον ἐπὶ πᾶσι Θεῶν, ἐσὶν εἰπέν ὅτι πιστευτόν μὲν ὡς ἐκ ἀβείι γιομμένοις τοῖς περι Ἰησοῦ ἰσορρομμένοις, ἔχι δὲ τοῖς περι τῶ Προκολλησίς Ἀριεῖς; τί μιν γὰρ βλομινῆ ἢ πρηνεία τα περι τον Ἀριεῖαν παραδύξα ἐπραγματευτο; ἔ τί ὠφελῆσαι τῶ των ἀνθρώπων γένει βλομινῆ, τα τηλικαῦτα (ὡς οἶε) ἐπεδείκνυτο, εκ ἔχεις λέγειν ἡμεις δὲ, ἐπαν τὰ περι τῶ Ἰησοῦ διηγώμιστα, ἔ τὴν τυχεῖται φέρομεν ἀπολογίαν περι τῶ ταῦτα γεγονέναι, τὸ τὸν Θεὸν βεθελλῆσθαι συεῖσθαι τὸν εἰς Ἰησοῦ ὡς σωτήριον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις λόγον. Orig. con. Cels.

sonableness of the doctrines objected against—and repel the objections, by sifting their character, shewing their unreasonableness, and exhibiting the internal evidence of the truth of those doctrines against which the objections are directed. *

* Among the Christian doctrines which chiefly proved stumbling-blocks in the way both of Jews and Gentiles, was that of the Resurrection; and for producing conviction of the truth of this doctrine, no argument was so commonly employed by the early advocates of Christianity, as the analogical one used by the Apostle Paul. They referred to those displays of power manifested in the creation of all things, in the preservation of the order and laws of nature, in the general mode of continuing existence by decay and reproduction—as furnishing decided proof of the possibility of the renovation of the body after death, and as giving probability to the doctrine of Christianity on that subject.—The employment of this argument by Clemens Romanus, has already been referred to. “*Ἰδωμεν, ἀγαπητοὶ, τὴν κατὰ καιρὸν γινομένην ἀναστασιν ἡμέρα καὶ νύξ ἀναστασιν ἡμῖν δηλῶσιν κοιμᾶται ἡ νύξ, ἀνίσταται ἡμερα, ἡ ἡμερα ἀπεισιν, νύξ ἐπέρχεται. Ἰδωμεν τὰς καρπὰς ὁ σπόρος πᾶσι δῆλον τινὰ τρόπον γινέται. Ἐξῆλθεν ὁ σπείρων καὶ ἔβαλεν εἰς τὴν γῆν, καὶ βληθέντων σπερμάτων, ἅτινα πίπτωκεν εἰς τὴν γῆν ξηρὰ καὶ γυμνά, διαλύει χρόνος, ἐπ’ ἐκ τῆς διάλυσεως ἡ μεγάλη δύναμις τῆς προνοίας τοῦ δεσπότου ἀνίστησιν αὐτὰ, καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἐνὸς πλείονα αὐξεῖ, καὶ ἐκφέρει κάρπον.*” Clem. ad Cor. Ep. I. “*Ὁν τροπὸν γὰρ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐκ ὄντας ἐποιήσει, τὸν αὐτὸν ἡγεμίαια τρόπον διὰ τὸ ἐλίσθαι τὰς αἰρομένους τὰ αὐτῶ ἀρετὰ, καὶ ἀφθαρσίας καὶ συνεσίας κατὰ ξιωβῆναι.*” Just. Mar. Ap. I. ‘*Quippe etiam terræ de cœlo discipulina est, arboris vestire post spolia, flores denuo colorare, herbas rursus imponere, exhibere eadem quæ absumpta sint semina; nec prius exhibere quam absumpta. Mira ratio: de fraudatrice*

Had the sentiments of the Author of Christianity and his early followers, regarding the validity and importance of the internal evidence, been in any degree disputable; reference might have been had to later authorities,

‘servatrix; ut reddat intercipit; ut custodiat perdit; ut integret, vitiat; ut etiam ampliet, prius decoquit. Siquidem uberiora et cultiora restituit quam exterminavit. Re vera fœnore interitu, et injuria usura, et lucro damno semel dixerim universa conditio recidiva est. Quodcunque conveneris, fuit; quodcunque amiseris nihil non iterum est. Omnia in statum redeunt quum abscesserint; omnia incipiunt quum desierint. Ideo finiuntur ut fiant. Nihil deperit nisi in salutem. Totus igitur hic ordo revolubilis rerum, testatio est resurrectionis mortuorum.’ Tertul. de Resur. Car.

“Ορατὴ ἔν ἡ γῆ γενεομένη ἔτι ὑπῆρχεν ἀκατασκευάστος· κατεσκευάσεν ἔν αὐτὴν καὶ κατεκόσμησεν ὁ Θεὸς δια παντοδαπῶν χλοῶν καὶ σπειρμάτων καὶ φυτῶν, σκόπει τὸ λοιπὸν τὴν ἐν τέτοις περιουσίαν καὶ διάφορον καλλονὴν καὶ πληθυν, καὶ ὅτι δι’ αὐτῶν δεικνύται ἡ ἀνάστασις, εἰς δ᾿ ἔγγραπτος της μελλούσης ἔσσεσθαι ἀναστάσεως ἀπάντων ἀνθρώπων.” Theoph. ad Autol. Lib. ii. “Αλλὰ καὶ τὸ ἀρνεῖσθαι σε νεκροὺς ἐγείρεσθαι”

* * Θεὸς σοι πολλὰ τεκμήρια ἐπιδείκνυσιν εἰς τὸ πιστεῦν αὐτῷ· εἰ γὰρ βύλει, κατανόησον τὴν τῶν καιρῶν καὶ ἡμερῶν καὶ νυκτῶν τελευτὴν, πῶς καὶ αὐτὰ τελευτᾷ καὶ ἀνίσταται· τί δὲ καὶ ἐχθὴ τῶν σπειρμάτων καὶ καρπῶν γινομένη ἔξ ἀνάστασις, καὶ τῆτο εἰς τὴν χρῆσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων; εἰ γὰρ τύχοι εἰπεῖν κόκκος σίτου ἢ τῶν λοιπῶν σπειρμάτων ἐπὶ ἀν βληθῆ εἰς τὴν γῆν, πρῶτον ἀποθνήσκει καὶ λυέται, εἶτα ἐγείρεται καὶ γίνεσθαι εὐχρηστος· &c. ταῦτα δὲ πάντα ἐνεργεῖ ἡ τῆ Θεοῦ σοφία, εἰς τὸ ἐπιδειξαι καὶ διὰ τούτων, ὅτι δυνάτος ἐστὶν ὁ Θεὸς ποιῆσαι τὴν καθολικὴν ἀνάστασιν ἀπάντων ἀνθρώπων. * * μὴ ἔν ἀπίστει, ἀλλὰ πιστεῖς.” Theoph. ad Aut. L. i. There is nothing surprising in the earnestness with which Theophilus here presses the analogical argument upon his unbelieving friend, since he declares in the words

which perhaps in such circumstances would have gone far to establish the point. Any such reference cannot however now be necessary, since it has been indisputably proved,

which immediately follow, that to this argument, in conjunction with that derived from prophecy, he owed his own faith.

“ Καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ ἠπίσταν τῆτο ἔσσειθαι, ἀλλὰ νῦν κατανόησας αὐτὰ πιστεύω, ἅμα καὶ ἐπιτυχῶν ἱεραῖς γραφαῖς των ἀγίων προφητων, οἱ ἔ προεῖπον διὰ πνευματος· Δεῖ τα προγεγονότα ᾧ τρέσθω γέγονε, ἔ τὰ ἐνεσῶτα τίνι τρέσθω γίνεται, ἔ τὰ ἐπερχόμενα ποιά τάξει ἀπαρξισθήσεται. ἀποδείξιν ἔν λαθῶν των γινομένων προαναπεφωνημένων, ἔκ ἀπιστῶ.”

The means therefore by which the doubts of this distinguished person were removed, furnish a proof from fact, of the importance of *combining* the internal with the external evidence.—

It must be confessed, however, that soon after the time of Theophilus, the theological conclusions of reason, and of consequence the internal evidence of Christianity, came to be considered by many as not merely useless, but destructive of that sublime faith, which was conceived the distinguishing mark of the mature Christian. The following passage from the spurious work attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, is a fair specimen of the transcendental speculations which then became prevalent concerning the Deity, and of the notions entertained respecting the sources whence all true knowledge of his character and administration are to be derived. The similarity in certain respects between these refined speculations, and others of more modern date, will be readily apparent.

“ Καὶ ἔκ ἐστὶ Θεός τι των ὄντων οὔδε ἔν τινὶ των ὄντων γνωσκέται· ἔ ἔν πᾶσι παντα ἔστὶ, καὶ ἔν ἔδενὶ οὔδεν, ἔ ἔκ πάντων πᾶσι γνωσκέται, ἔ ἔξ ἔδενός ἔδενί· καὶ γαρ ταῦτα ἔρθῶς περὶ Θεοῦ λέγομεν· ἔ ἔκ των ὄντων ἀπαντων ὑμνεῖται κατὰ τὴν πάντων ἀναλογίαν ὧν ἔστὶν αἴτιος· ἔ ἔστὶν αὔθης ἢ Δεισιλάτη τῆ Θεῶ γνῶσις, ἢ δι ἀγνωσίας γνωσκεμένη, κατὰ τὴν

that not only were the intellectual and moral perceptions of the human mind with the theological conclusions deducible by reason from these perceptions and from observation of nature, held trustworthy by the inspired publishers of Christianity;—but that the evidences interdicted by Dr C. as incompetent and fallacious, were exhibited and urged both on Jews and Gentiles in the earliest ages of Christianity. Is Dr C. in possession of evidence sufficient to establish the fact, that the exhibition of these evidences was absolutely nugatory, and had no effect whatever in leading the Gentiles to embrace the truth as it is in Jesus?—Indisputable evidence of this fact would have been necessary to entitle him to make the assertion he has hazarded regarding the means by which the Gentiles were converted. But so far is he from being prepared to furnish any proof of this fact, that he appears to be in possession of evidence capable of completely disproving it;—evidence which entitles him to affirm, in the face of his former assertion, that the internal proofs which he has all along been labouring to subvert, were those to which

*ὑπὲρ νοῦν ἔγνωσαν, ὅταν ὁ νῆς τῶν ὄλων πάντων ἀποσάξῃ, ἔπειτα ἔξ ἐκείνων ἀφ᾽ ἑαυτῶν, ἐνωθῆ ταῖς ὑπερφύσειν ἀκρίτων, ἐκείθεν ἔξ ἐκεῖ τῶ ἀνεξίτητον ἡγεθῆται
θει της σοφίας κάλαμα πρόμινος. Dion. Areop. De div. Nom. Lib. 7.*

the conversion of the Gentiles was chiefly owing. For in the same work which has now in part been subjected to examination, he on one occasion thus expresses himself. ‘ In these days, the truth as it is in Jesus, came to the minds of its disciples, recommended by its novelty, by its grandeur, by the power and recency of its evidences, and above all, by its vast and evident superiority over the fooleries of a degrading paganism.’ *—By ‘ the power and recency of its evidences,’ the Author had doubtless in view, the power and recency of the external evidences—because evidence of no other class is admitted into his system. ‘ The truth as it is in Jesus came,’ then, he tells us, ‘ recommended by its novelty, its grandeur,’ (qualities which could scarcely according to his system form any recommendation,) and by its external evidences. ‘ The truth as it is in Jesus,’ must mean here the Christian system of doctrines and morals;—it cannot possibly mean the miracles and testimony or other evidences; because this would be to inform us that the evidences came recommended by the evidences. The Gospel system of doctrines and precepts came then, recommended by its external evidences, and

* § 191.

‘above all,’—*i. e.* it came recommended by something even more powerful (in our Author’s opinion) than the evidence of testimony and miracles. This most powerful of evidences, by means of which the truths of Christianity made their way to the minds of the Gentile converts, was we are informed, their ‘vast and evident superiority over the fooleries of a degrading paganism.’—This superiority, ‘vast and evident’ as it unquestionably is, never could have been apparent, if the pagans had not *compared* ‘the truth as it is in Jesus,’ with the ‘fooleries’ of their degrading superstition. We must presume, that before discovering this superiority, they had instituted a comparison between the doctrine of One Self-existent Deity, adorned with all moral perfection,—the All-wise Designer, and Almighty maker of the universe,—the righteous Ruler of the World,—the bountiful Bestower of every good gift;—and the ‘fooleries’ of a multitude of capricious deities sporting with the lives and fortunes of mankind. We must presume that they compared the spiritual service which that Great Being approves,—the scheme of reconciliation through the Redeemer,—the purity of the gospel morals,—the gracious aids afforded to human weakness,

and that life and immortality which it brings to light,—with the childish, the obscene, and the bloody rites of Paganism,—the laxity of its morals,—its insufficiency to inspire steadfast hope, or to calm the anxious fears of its votaries.—But upon the principles previously advanced by our Author, the unfortunate pagan could have instituted no such comparison. He was bound to consider the sublime and harmonious system of the gospel as precisely on a level with the fooleries of his ancient faith. He was bound to look to the external evidence alone; and if he found it satisfactory, ‘to take his lesson as he found it.’ He ‘had a right to sit in judgment over the ‘credentials of Heaven’s ambassador,’—that is, over the external evidence;—but ‘he had ‘no right’ thus ‘to sit in judgment over the ‘information he gives,’ ‘more than over the ‘information of a visitor from worlds beyond ‘the limits of our astronomy.’—But for what purpose should we suppose such a comparison to be instituted?—How should the pagan *discern* the superiority, to which such powerful efficacy is attributed by our Author? Upon his principles, so far is such superiority, however vast, from outweighing all the external evidence;—so far is it from forming any ground

of belief, that it could not even be *perceived*.—The ‘previous conceptions’ of the pagan, ‘so far from helping him, behoved to be abandoned.’ He had no previous conceptions no standard in his own mind, by which he could form any judgment as to what was fit or unfit for the Deity to reveal. He had ‘no experience of God’—‘nothing was more *thoroughly* beyond the cognizance of his faculties than the truths of religion’—he had no means whatever of determining, with the lowest degree of probability, that the Christian system was more worthy of God, or more subservient to the highest interests of man, than the fooleries of his own faith.—And yet, so omnipotent is truth—so impossible is it to conduct consistently an argument which proposes to establish the fallacy of primary elements of reason and morals,—that we are enabled to state on the authority of Dr. C. that even when sunk in pagan darkness, there is still a chord in the human heart, which vibrates at the sound of religious and moral truth, and with responsive voice proclaims its superiority over error.

CONCLUSION.

It thus appears,—that the principles upon which Dr Chalmers' system of Christian Evidence is constructed, not only subvert the conclusions of natural theology with the internal evidence, but destroy also the external proofs ;—and that the various arguments he employs in support of his system, are destructive of each other, and of the objects at which he aims.—If that perception or inference of the understanding, by which we are made acquainted with the existence of Efficient Causes, from contemplation of their effects and operations, is disowned ;—if our capacity to infer from the nature and qualities of effects, the intellectual and moral nature and qualities of their causes, is denied ;—if the immutability of those moral distinctions which are perceived by man, is rejected ; the argument from miracles is rendered inconclusive,

the credibility of Christian testimony cannot be ascertained, and the terms which Revelation employs to express moral qualities belonging to the Deity, become unintelligible. If, on the other hand, these principles are admitted, they furnish indubitable ground for theological conclusions, which justify opposition to every pretended revelation, containing doctrines or precepts, found on examination to be of irrational or immoral nature, on whatever evidence of an external kind such pretensions may rest.—It has been shewn, that these principles are acknowledged by the most distinguished philosophers; that the conclusions of natural theology are reached by processes strictly inductive; that the correspondence between these conclusions and the doctrines of Revelation, furnishes evidence of the truth of the latter, of a legitimate kind; and that both the internal and external evidences of Christianity, proceeding on similar principles—principles strictly consonant with those of the inductive philosophy, are of the soundest and most philosophical nature. It has farther been shewn that the evidences which Dr C. rejects as fallacious and pernicious, were deemed conclusive and important by the in-

spired publishers of the Gospel and their immediate followers, and were by them employed in conjunction with the external proofs, in ushering Christianity into general reception.

Dr C.'s scheme of evidence appears to possess an advantage over all others in this respect, that no antecedent conclusions of a theological and moral nature are required, in order to enable the mind to judge of the truth or authority of Revelation. It professes to apply itself to every mind, how vacant soever; and disdains those aids which have usually been considered as advantageous, if not indispensable to the successful exhibition of Christian evidence. If Dr C. had limited his endeavours to the conversion of the thorough-paced sceptic; if he had proposed to himself no other end, than by means of testimony and miracles to produce Christian faith, in minds which are insensible to moral and intellectual perceptions common to human beings, or which are incapable of discovering the legitimacy of conclusions drawn by reason from these primary perceptions;—his attempt would have been harmless, and might have passed unnoticed. But when he makes common cause with the sceptic; when he adopts his principles, or rather his

negation of principles ;—when on the part of Christianity he forms an alliance with Atheism the basest of her foes, and when sacrificing the Internal Evidence as the seal of this monstrous confederacy, he turns the arms of Christianity against Natural Religion, her ancient and faithful ally ;—his proceedings no longer possess the character of harmless inanity.—Nor can the imaginary advantage above adverted to,—an advantage which even were it real, is too limited in extent to be of any great account,—be permitted to screen from exposure, principles so extensively destructive as those which are employed to obtain it. Admitting that there exist in nature a few honest Atheists, the prototypes of that personage to whose views Dr C. has accommodated the Evidences of Christianity ;—and supposing it certain (instead of impossible) that they must, in consistency with their sceptical speculations, be thus convinced of the truth of Christianity ;—would such an accession to the Christian community, balance the unconquerable aversion produced in the minds of unbelievers of almost every other class, by the view which he has given of Christian Evidence ?

But supposing the assumption of those prin-

ciples on which Dr C. has founded the Christian argument, were attended with no such disadvantage ; and laying out of view the incalculable injury which must be sustained by the Christian cause, if its adversaries shall at any time find themselves warranted by the conduct of its friends, to dismiss from their view the Internal Evidence ; what conceivable advantages can render eligible, or allowable to Christians, the adoption of principles which are radically *false* ?—Supposing the adversary were so deficient in perspicacity, as to admit the soundness of evidence grounded on such principles,—is victory, not truth, to be henceforth the object at which the advocate of the truth as it is in Jesus aims ?—And is the ancient vitious method of arguing in its defence, technically denominated the *æconomical*, to be revived in the nineteenth century ?

There is confessedly something imposing in the character of a system of evidence, scorning the aid of human perceptions of right and wrong ; spurning the conclusions of reason regarding things divine ; and denying the competency of finite intellect to form any probable judgment respecting the character of a message from heaven. Nothing can be better calculated to call forth the applause of the

vain and superficial part of mankind.—While it is unhappily too true, that there is a pride of intellect, which contemptuously rejects every doctrine that is in any respect incomprehensible,—which presumptuously dares to measure the limits of truth by the line of human reason, and scorns all light and support from on high ;—it is not less certain, how paradoxical soever the assertion may appear, that there is another sort of intellectual pride, the gratification of which is to be accomplished by the prostration of reason ; which derides as futile the attempt of human intelligence to approach the confines of religious science ; and which boasts itself of breaking asunder those fetters with which human reason and human learning would entangle the spirit that is in man, and of arriving, under the *exclusive* guidance of supernatural light, at the knowledge and certainty of all things divine. This sort of pride is not less common than the other ; and it cannot but secure the popularity of a system of Christian Evidence, suited not indeed in all points to its wildest extravagancies, but obviously calculated to foster it, in other respects.

To this sort of intellectual pride it must prove peculiarly galling to be obliged to be.

lieve, that none of all the Christian evidences can become conclusive, unless the certainty of a few principles of intellectual and moral truth, incapable of being otherwise proved than by reference to the constitutional perceptions of the human mind, is acknowledged. Every man, however, of sound and unbiased understanding, who has at all reflected on the nature of evidence, is sensible that to such perceptions must be ultimately referred every judgment which we form : and that there is no other foundation for human science, in any one of its departments. The amount of evidence supporting the conclusions of natural theology, and the truth of Christianity, is certainly as great as that which serves for the support of philosophical conclusions that are held undoubted ; and which were any man to reject, he would be deemed incapable of being convinced by any means consistent with the natural progression of the human understanding.—No reason exists for scepticism in the one case which does not equally justify it in the other : nor can any satisfactory cause be shewn, why ‘ observation’ or ‘ experience’ should furnish conclusions entitled to command conviction, while the moral and intellectual perceptions formerly referred to, are held

unworthy of confidence. 'Every man,' says Bishop Horsley, 'implicitly trusts his bodily senses concerning external objects placed at a convenient distance; and every man may with as good a reason put even a greater trust in the perceptions of which he is conscious in his own mind; which indeed are nothing else than *the first notices of truth and of Himself*, which the Father of our Spirits imparts to subordinate minds, and which are to them *the first principles and seeds of intellect.*'

To the superficial thinker it may seem that Christian Evidence, according to the view now given of it, rests on principles of so abstruse a nature, that great metaphysical acuteness, and habits of close reflection, are necessary, in order to the perception of its strength and conclusiveness: and that such a view of the subject is contrary to that given in Scripture, which represents the Gospel as intended for the reception of the simple no less than of the wise. Such an opinion, however, has no foundation in truth. Abstruse metaphysical investigations may become necessary in order to shew the fallacy of subtle objections against Christian evidence; while such disquisitions are altogether unnecessary in order to enable

the candid mind to receive conviction from the simple exhibition of the evidence. An investigation of the ultimate principles on which evidence is founded, may be abstruse, yet the evidence itself may be clear and convincing to men of the most ordinary and uncultivated powers : just as the illiterate seaman may pronounce with confidence and with truth, on the distance of the land which he descries, and on the size of a distant vessel, though utterly ignorant of Berkeley's Theory of Vision by which the perception of distance is explained, and perhaps wholly incapable of understanding that theory. A man may have the fullest confidence in the existence and operation of efficient causes, though a stranger to the nature of the law or principle of belief, by the operation of which that confidence is universally produced ; and wholly ignorant of the method of repelling those objections, to which the agitation of questions on the subject of causation has given rise. From the manifold appearances of intelligence, of wisdom, justice, and benignity, which the constitution of things exhibits to his view, he may infer with the most determined confidence, the intelligent and moral character of the Being by whom that constitution was arranged ; without

ever having reflected on the nature of the intellectual process by which his conclusions are attained, and without ever having heard of the principles on which the argument from final causes proceeds. He may place full reliance on the testimony of a person of high moral character, without being in the least aware that such reliance has any thing to do with the power of reason to infer the existence and qualities of invisible causes, from contemplation of their effects. And being a stranger to all those speculations, by which sceptics have attempted to set aside the conceptions which reason suggests regarding the divine attributes and administration, he may from the exhibition of supernatural phenomena infer with perfect confidence the truth of doctrines taught by the operator. In short, placing undoubted reliance on the constitutional exercise of his reasoning faculties, and the trustworthiness of his mental perceptions, he may without any philosophical analysis of principles, or any metaphysical investigation of laws of belief, estimate accurately the amount of evidence submitted to him, and possess a sound and rational conviction of the truth of Christianity. It is only when the principles of Christian Evidence are assailed by sceptical objections ;

when metaphysical subtilities are employed to subvert any part of that evidence; that it becomes proper to enter upon such investigations as that in which we have been now engaged: and it is only to those who have found the conclusions of common sense shaken by false reasonings, that such investigations are necessary or useful.—We accordingly find that our Saviour, who well knew what was in man, proposed the evidences on which he rested the truth and authority of what he taught, in the simplest and shortest manner. And although he never declined reasoning on the nature of those evidences, when the occasion required it,—it was only when objections were urged, and the validity of the proofs he offered was called in question, that he entered on any discussion of the principles on which the conclusiveness of these proofs is founded. *

* ‘ In order to obtain a rational conviction of the truth of Christianity, the generality of mankind need not attempt what they are unequal to; plain evidence is presented to them; there is no need of intricate reasoning to enable them to perceive it: they are desired only to attend to it; if they do, they will sustain no loss by not entering into the labyrinths of controversy; if they be but honest, it will by its own power force their assent.’—‘ By readily giving evidence, Christ shews that he was conscious of the truth of his mission, and of his

Without any disparagement to the external evidence, the indispensable importance of which is on all hands acknowledged, it may be truly affirmed that the internal evidence is in fact peculiarly adapted to produce conviction in the minds of the generality of men, notwithstanding the apparent abstruseness of the principles on which it proceeds. And it is one of the most unfortunate aspects, which Dr C.'s scheme of Christian Evidence presents, that it destroys that species of proof which is peculiarly accessible to men of ordinary and uncultivated understandings.* It

‘ power to support it ; and that he desired to support it only by
 ‘ the most legitimate means ; that he sought to bring men to
 ‘ believe, only by a copious and undisguised address to the na-
 ‘ tural principles of belief. He never of his own accord labour-
 ‘ ed to set off the evidence which he had given. This shewed
 ‘ his sense of the strength of that evidence, it shewed that he
 ‘ understood well in what way the bulk of mankind ought to
 ‘ be addressed ; it shewed that he was far from the artifice by
 ‘ which persons of a subtilizing and disputatious turn often con-
 ‘ found plain men, and hide the want of evidence from others.
 ‘ But whenever the evidence of his mission was called in ques-
 ‘ tion, he readily defended it, illustrated it, and frequently too
 ‘ made additions to it. This was a new and well placed ex-
 ‘ pression of conscious sincerity : it was in this situation that
 ‘ reasoning and disputing became consistent with dignity of
 ‘ character.’—GERARD'S *Dissertations*.

* ‘ This excellence of the Christian doctrine, considered in
 ‘ itself, as without it no external evidence of revelation could

is not to be doubted that the faith of a large proportion of Christians leans mainly on the internal evidence;—nay it is questionable, whether by means of proofs strictly external, any other faith could in the absence of all internal evidence be produced, than that of

‘ be sufficient, so it gives to those who are qualified to perceive it
 ‘ that internal probability to the whole scheme, that the external
 ‘ evidence, in that proportion of it in which it may be supposed
 ‘ to be understood by common men, may well be allowed
 ‘ to complete the proof. This I am persuaded is the consideration
 ‘ that chiefly weighs with those who are quite unable to
 ‘ collect and unite for themselves the scattered parts of that
 ‘ multifarious proof which history and prophecy afford.’—‘ The
 ‘ sense and consciousness of the excellence of the Gospel doctrine
 ‘ is an evidence which is felt no doubt in its full force by
 ‘ many a man who can hold no argument about the nature of
 ‘ its certainty;—by him who holds the plough or tends the
 ‘ loom, who hath never been sufficiently at leisure from the laborious
 ‘ occupations of necessitous life to speculate about moral
 ‘ truth and beauty in the abstract—for a quick discernment
 ‘ and a truth of taste in religious subjects proceeds not from that
 ‘ subtilty or refinement of the understanding by which men are
 ‘ qualified to figure in the arts of rhetoric and disputation, but
 ‘ from the moral qualities of the heart. A devout and honest
 ‘ mind refers the doctrines and precepts of religion to that exemplar
 ‘ of the good and fair which it carries about within itself in its own
 ‘ feelings: By their agreement with this it understands their
 ‘ excellence: Understanding their excellence, it is disposed to embrace
 ‘ them and to obey them; and in this disposition listens with candour
 ‘ to the external evidence.’—

HORSLEY'S *Serm.* Vol. III.

those spirits, who in their present unhappy state believe yet tremble. What friend then to the Christian cause, can contemplate without serious alarm, the operation of principles avowedly subversive of this main support of genuine Christian faith;—principles not advanced by an adversary, but by an advocate of Christianity;—not hazarded by an obscure individual, or disseminated within a narrow circle; but wrought into a systematic Treatise, bearing the title of ‘Evidence and Authority of the Christian Revelation,’—which under the sanction of a popular name, has been sent more rapidly into wide circulation, than perhaps any work on the subject which ever issued from the press?

Such are the consequences which Dr Chalmers’s speculations upon this subject, sent forth undoubtedly with the best intentions, are nevertheless calculated to produce. Animated by a degree of zeal for religion, which cannot but command the respect of every sincere Christian,—and possessed of talents and acquirements which enable him with extraordinary success to impress upon the public mind, certain subjects of religious and scientific interest,—his fervid imagination has, notwithstanding, betrayed him into the adoption of principles,

fraught with serious injury to the cause of genuine Christianity.—The union of her evidences dis severed, and their co-operative force destroyed,—the internal evidence so necessary to the production of genuine faith, and by which her claims come so powerfully recommended to every candid and upright mind, disclaimed and pronounced fallacious;—the moral and theological conclusions which reason attains, and on which that evidence is built, stigmatized as false, nay pernicious to her cause;—and her chief external evidences shattered to their lowest foundations by those very means, which were rashly employed to secure their stability;—what stay has Christianity left on which she may rest her cause, and what reply remains for her friends to give, to those that ask a reason of the hope that is in them?—When put in balance against such injuries, what avail the advantages which the author of these speculations contemplates? Of what account is the adaptation of his system to the perverted understanding of ‘consistent Atheists,’ supposing a few such personages to exist, and admitting the pretended efficacy of the system in such cases?—Of what consequence is the right, which his system assumes, of repelling objections directed against the reasonableness and excellence of Christian

doctrines and precepts, by a summary appeal on all occasions to the external evidence?—a right which, so far from being advantageous, could not be exercised without manifest detriment, even were it established in the fullest manner. Supposing such a right completed, and exercised,—would Christianity find her influence and authority increase, while the ‘skilful officers in her cause’ carefully ‘entrench themselves behind the unscaled barrier of the historical evidence,’* leaving her doctrines and precepts subjected to charges of inconsistency with those moral sentiments and theological conclusions, which mankind by common consent deem trustworthy; and the excellence and harmony of her whole system defaced by the foulest aspersions?—Such was not the ancient mode in which the Christian warfare was conducted; and those who have been accustomed to contemplate that mode with admiration, and to triumph in its recorded success, cannot but view with alarm the total change of tactics proposed by this modern leader. †

* § 141.

† How opposite to the views of Dr C. regarding the proper mode of conducting the defence of Christianity, are those apparently entertained by the writer of the following passage.—

Amidst the assaults of foes, and the injudicious defences of friends possessed of zeal without knowledge,—it is consoling to the enlightened friend of Christianity to reflect, that its evidences are so combined,—have their roots so firmly fixed in the principles of our nature, and so interwoven together, that no power can tear up one without the others, or uproot the whole without subverting the rational and moral constitution of the mind.—If principles are advanced, which destroy the authority of our rational and moral percep-

‘Anxious as we are to put every thing that bears upon the Christian argument into all its lights; and fearless as we feel for the result of a most thorough sifting of it; and thinking as we do think it, the foulest scorn that any pigmy philosopher of the day should mince his ambiguous scepticism to a set of giddy and ignorant admirers, or that a half-learned and superficial public should associate with the Christian priesthood, the blindness and the bigotry of a sinking cause—with these feelings, *we are not disposed to blink a single question that may be started on the subject of the Christian evidences.* There is not one of its parts or bearings which needs the shelter of a disguise thrown over it. Let the priests of another faith ply their prudential expedients, and look so wise and so wary in the execution of them. But Christianity stands in a higher and a firmer attitude. The defensive armour of a shrinking or timid policy does not suit her. Her’s is the naked majesty of truth,’ &c. CHALMER’S *Astron. Sermon*. III.

tions ; subverting those conclusions regarding the existence, character, and administration of God, which are legitimately deduced by reason from these primary perceptions, and from observation of nature and its laws ;—then, indeed it follows, that no evidence can be found on which the truth of Christianity may be established. All external evidence holds of such perceptions and conclusions, and of consequence falls with them : and it only remains for those who reject their authority, either to reject Christianity also, or to rest their conviction of its truth on sensible internal impulse ; acknowledging the impossibility of giving any other reason of the hope that is in them, than their own assertion of the existence of such an impulse. To attempt the production of evidence, is only to contradict themselves. And sceptical speculations of all sorts, militating against the soundness of Christian evidence in any of its departments, must always be characterized by contradictions too palpable to escape detection. The injury therefore to the Christian cause, of which such speculations are productive, never can be permanent.—The Christian Revelation, imparting discoveries of the most important and beneficial nature ;—harmonious in itself ;—in no

respect repugnant to right reason, and in all its greater features indissolubly connected, in the most obvious manner, with the intellectual and moral perceptions of our nature ; supported, moreover, by the strongest and most unimpeachable testimony ;—confirmed by miracles ; and by various collateral evidences of an external nature ;—possesses all possible characteristics of Divine truth :—and the more fully its claims are investigated, will the more fully establish its right to command the faith and obedience of rational beings.

THE END.





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